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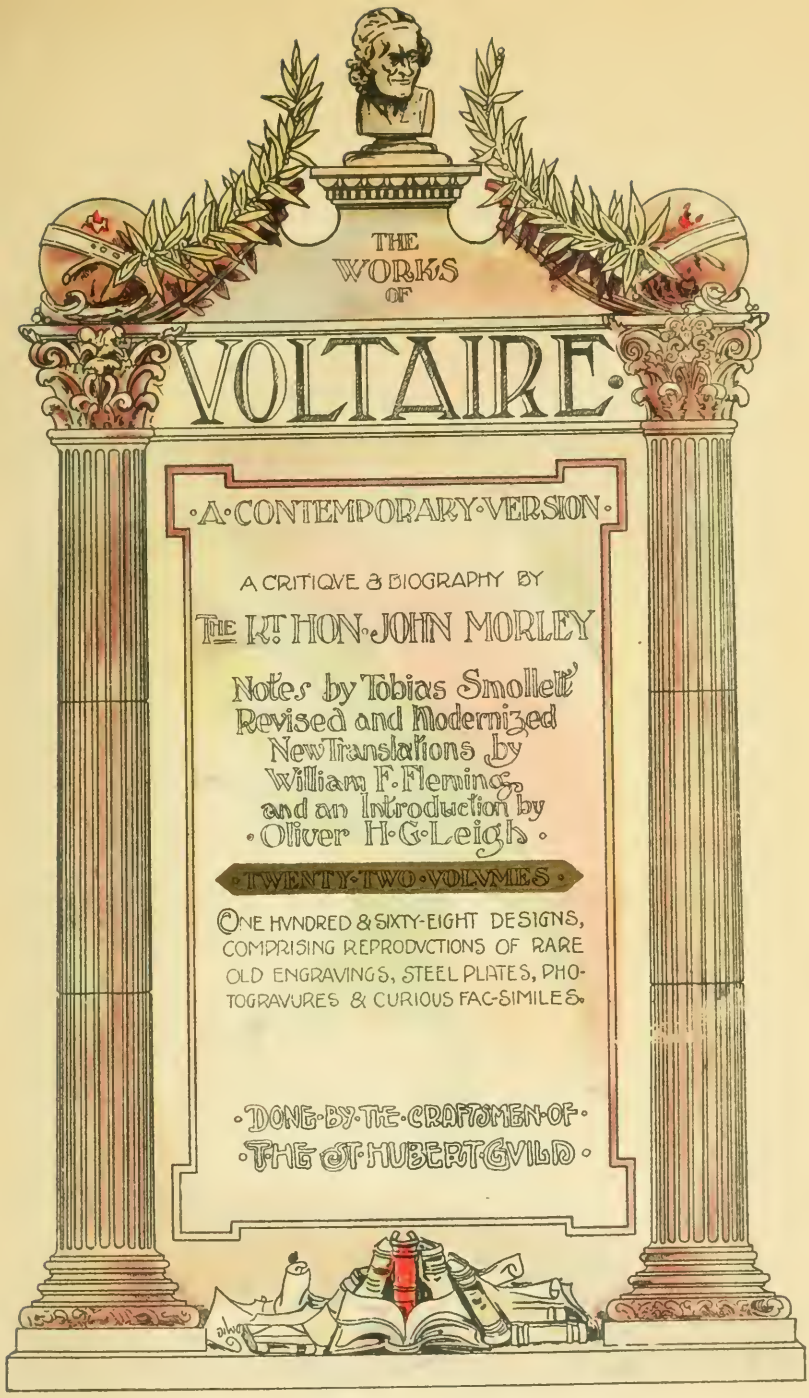
The WORKS of VOLTAIRE

*"Between two servants of Humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation. * * * * Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect: JESUS WEPT: VOLTAIRE SMILED. Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization."*

VICTOR HUGO.

"O, MY LORD; YOU ARE PALE AND BLOODY"

SEMIRAMIS, ACT V



THE WORKS OF

VOLTAIRE

A CONTEMPORARY VERSION

A CRITIQVE & BIOGRAPHY BY

THE RT HON JOHN MORLEY

Notes by Tobias Smollett
Revised and Modernized
New Translations by
William F. Fleming
and an Introduction by
Oliver H.G. Leigh

TWENTY-TWO VOLVMES

ONE HVNDRED & SIXTY-EIGHT DESIGNS, COMPRISING REPRODVCTIONS OF RARE OLD ENGRAVINGS, STEEL PLATES, PHOTOGRAVVRES & CVRIOVS FAC-SIMILES.

DONE BY THE CRAFTSMEN OF THE ST HVBERT GVILD

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

VOLTAIRE

VOL. IX — PART I

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ALZIRE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DON GUZMAN, Governor of Peru.

DON ALVAREZ, { Father of Guzman, and late Governor.

ZAMOR, Sovereign of a Part of Potosi.

MONTEZUMA, Sovereign of another Part.

ALZIRE, Daughter of Montezuma.

EMIRA, CEPHALE. { Attendants on Alzire.

SPANISH Officers.

AMERICANS.

SCENE, LIMA.

In his preface to this play Voltaire says; "This tragedy, the fable of which is invented, and almost of a new species, was written with a view of showing how far superior the spirit of true religion is to the light of nature. The religion of a barbarian consists in offering up to his gods the blood of his enemies; a Christian badly instructed has seldom much more humanity: to be a strict observer of some unnecessary rites and ceremonies, and at the same time deficient in the most essential duties, to say certain prayers at particular times, and carefully to conceal his vices; this is his religion: that of a true Christian is to look upon all mankind as his brethren, to do them all the good in his power and pardon their offences: such is *Guzman* at the hour of death, and *Alvarez* during the whole course of his life; such a man was Henry IV., as I have described him, even with all his foibles: in every part of my writings I have endeavored to enforce that humanity which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of a thinking being: the reader will always find in them (if I may venture to say so much of my own works) a desire to promote the happiness of all men, and an *abhorrence* of injustice and oppression: it is this, and this alone, which hath hitherto saved them from that obscurity to which their many inperfections would otherwise long since have condemned them."

ALZIRE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN.

ALVAREZ.

At length, for so the council hath decreed,
Guzman succeeds Alvarez; long, my son,
Mayest thou preserve for heaven and for thy king
This better half of our new conquered world,
This fertile source of riches and of crimes!
Joyful to thee I yield the post of honor,
That suits but ill with feeble age like mine;
In youth thy father trod the paths of glory;
Alvarez first our winged castles bore
To Mexico's astonished sons; he led
Spain's gallant heroes to this golden shore:
After a life spent in my country's service,
Could I have formed these heroes into men,
Could I have made them virtuous, mild, and good,
I had been amply paid for all my toils:
But who shall stop the haughty conqueror?
Alas! my son, their cruelties obscure
The lustre of their fame; I weep the fate
Of these unhappy victors, raised by heaven
To greatness but to be supremely wicked.
O Guzman, I am verging to the grave,
Let me but live to see thee govern here
As justice shall direct thee, and I die
With pleasure.

GUZMAN.

By thy great example fired,
With thee I fought and conquered for my country;
From thee must learn to rule: it is not mine
To give the wise and good Alvarez laws,
But to receive them from him.

ALVAREZ.

No; my son,
The sovereign power can never be divided:
Worn down with years and labor, I resign
All worldly pomp; it is enough for me
If yet my feeble voice be sometimes heard
To counsel and direct thee; trust me, Guzman,
Men are not creatures one would wish to rule:
To that almighty being, whom too long
I have neglected, would I consecrate
My poor remains of life; one boon alone,
As friend, I ask of thee, as father claim;
To give me up those slaves who by your order
Are here confined; this day, my son, should be
A day of pardon, marked by clemency,
And not by justice.

GUZMAN.

A request from you
Is a command; but think, my lord, I beg,
What dangers may ensue: a savage people,
But half subdued, and to the yoke of slavery
Bending reluctant, ready for revolt,
Should never be familiar with their conquerors,
Or dare to look on those they should be taught
To tremble at: unarmed with power and vengeance
They would despise us: these untutored Indians,
Fiery and bold, ill brook the galling rein

Of servitude, by chastisement alone
Made tame, and humble, pardoned once, they think
You fear them; power, in short, is lost by mildness;
Severity alone insures obedience.
The brave Castilian serves in honor's cause,
With cheerful resignation, 'tis his pride,
His glory; but inferior nations court
Oppression; force and only force constrains them:
Did not the gods of these barbarians drink
The blood of men, they would not be adored.

ALVAREZ.

And can a Christian, as thou art, approve
These tyrant maxims, the detested offspring
Of narrow policy? are these the means
To win the wild barbarian to our faith?
Thinkest thou to rule them with an iron hand,
And serve a God of peace with war and slaughter?
Braved I for this the burning tropic's rage,
And all the terrors of a world unknown,
To see our country cursed, our faith disgraced?
God sent us here for other purposes,
Sent us to make his holy name revered,
His sacred laws beloved: whilst we, my son,
Unmindful of that faith which we profess,
The laws we teach, and all the tender ties
Of soft humanity, insatiate still
For blood and gold, instead of winning o'er
These savages by gentle means, destroy them.
All is confusion, death, and horror round us,
And nought have we of heaven but its thunder;
Our name indeed bears terror with it; Spain
Is feared, but hated too: we are the scourge
Of this new world, vain, covetous, unjust;
In short, I blush to own it, we alone

Are the barbarians here: the simple savage,
Though fierce by nature, is in courage equal,
In goodness our superior. O my Guzman,
Had he, like us, been prodigal of blood,
Had he not felt the throbs of tender pity,
Alvarez had not lived to speak his virtues:
Hast thou forgot that day, when by a crowd
Of desperate natives I was circled in
On every side, and all my faithful band
Of followers cut off; alone I stood,
And every moment looked for death, when, lo;
At mention of my name, they dropped their arms;
And straight a young American approached me,
Embraced my knees, and bathed them with his tears;
And "is it you," he cried, "is it my friend?
Live, good Alvarez, virtue pure as thine
May be most useful to us; be a father
To the unhappy; let thy tyrant nation,
That would enslave us, learn from hence—to pardon,
And own a savage capable of virtue."
I see you are moved; O hearken to the voice
Of mild humanity, by me she speaks,
By me addresses Guzman; O my son,
Canst thou expect the object of thy wishes,
The fair Alzire ever will crown thy hopes,
If thou art cruel? thinkest thou to cement
The dearest bonds of nature in the blood
Of her loved countrymen, or shall their groans
Be heard, and Guzman soften into mercy?

GUZMAN.

'Tis your command, my lord, and I submit;
They have their freedom, but on this condition,

For so our laws require, they must be Christians:
To quit their idols, and embrace our faith,
Alone can save them; we must bend by force
Their stubborn hearts, and drag them to the altar;
One king must be obeyed, one God adored.

ALVAREZ.

Hear me, my son, I wish, as much as Guzman,
That truth may fix her sacred empire here,
That neither heaven nor Spain henceforth may find
A foe on earth; but know, the heart oppressed
Is never conquered: I force none, yet I
Have conquered many; the true God, my son,
The God of Christians is a God of mercy.

GUZMAN.

You've conquered, sir, the father over his son
Is absolute; and you, my lord, would soften
The hardest heart, whilst virtue by Alvarez
In mildest accents pleads her powerful cause:
O since kind heaven to thee hath lent the art
Of soft persuasion, use it for thy son,
On thee alone depends the happiness
Of Guzman's life: the proud Alzire scorns
My proffered hand: I love her but too well,
Heaven knows how dearly! but I cannot stoop
Meanly to sooth a haughty woman's pride,
I cannot make myself a poor tame slave
To her imperious will; but thou hast power
O'er the fair tyrant's father; talk to him
For the last time; let him command his daughter
To take my hand, and make your Guzman happy;
And yet it hurts my soul to think Alvarez
Should stoop so low, and be a suppliant for me.

ALVAREZ.

Already I have spoke, and Montezuma
Hath seen his daughter; she will soon be thine.
I've been a friend to his unhappy race,
And soothed the sorrows of captivity:
Already he hath quitted his false gods;
Alzire too, a convert to our faith,
To this new world shines forth a bright example.
She only can unite the jarring nations,
And make us happy; thy long wished-for nuptials
Shall join two distant globes; these fierce barbarians,
Who now detest our laws, when they shall see
The daughter of their king in Guzman's arms,
Cheerful beneath thy easy yoke shall bend
Their willing hearts, and soon be all our own:
But Montezuma comes; away, my son,
Expect me with Alzire at the altar.

SCENE II.

ALVAREZ, MONTEZUMA.

ALVAREZ.

At length, obedient to a father's will,
Alzire yields, I hope, to thy persuasion.

MONTEZUMA.

If yet my daughter trembles at the thought
Of wedding him who has destroyed her race,
Alvarez will forgive a woman's weakness;
For thou hast been a father to the wretched:
Thy gentle manners teach us to revere
That holy faith from whence they sprung; by thee
The will of heaven to this new world revealed,

Enlightened our dark minds; what mighty Spain
Unconquered left, thy virtue has subdued:
Thy cruel countrymen's remorseless rage
Had rendered even thy God detestable,
But that in thee His great perfections shine,
His goodness, and His mercy; in thy heart
We trace his image; Montezuma's thine,
His daughter, and his house; the good Alvarez
Shall have them all: Potosi and Peru,
With my Alzire, shall descend to Guzman:
Prepare the nuptial rites, adorn your temple,
And let your son be ready to receive her:
Methinks it is as if the immortal beings
Had deigned to visit earth, and mix with men.

ALVAREZ.

O Montezuma, let me live to see
This blest event, and I shall die content.
O God, whose gracious hand conducted us
To this new world, enlighten and preserve it;
Propitious smile on these first holy vows
Made at thy altar here! adieu, my friend,
To thee I owe my Guzman's happiness.

SCENE III.

MONTEZUMA.

[*Alone.*

O thou true God, whose powerful arm destroyed
Those idle deities I once adored,
Watch o'er the poor remains of my sad life,
And sooth my sorrows; I have lost my all,
All but Alzire, O protect her youth,
Watch o'er her steps, and guide her tender heart!

SCENE IV.

MONTEZUMA, ALZIRE.

MONTEZUMA.

Daughter, the hour is come to make thyself
And the world happy, to command the conqueror,
And make the vanquished smile, restore thy country
To her lost honor, and to regal power
Rise from the bosom of adversity.
Alzire will obey, I know she will;
Dry up thy tears, a father must not see them.

ALZIRE.

I have no will but yours; yet, O my lord,
See my despair, and look into my soul.

MONTEZUMA.

No more of that; thy word is passed, Alzire,
And I depend on it.

ALZIRE.

'Twas extorted from me;
The cruel sacrifice: is this a time
To plight my faith, and think of nuptial joy,
This hapless day, when all I held most dear
Was ravished from me, when our wide-stretched empire
And all her hosts, the children of the sun,
Inglorious fell beneath the cruel Guzman?
O 'twas a day marked by the hand of heaven
As most unfortunate.

MONTEZUMA.

Our days, Alzire,
Are happy or unhappy from ourselves,

And not from circumstance or accident,
As superstition taught our ancestors
To credit; think no more on it.

ALZIRE.

On this day
My Zamor fell, our country's great avenger,
My lover, chosen by thee, by thee, my father,
To be Alzire's husband.

MONTEZUMA.

I have paid
The debt of sorrow due to Zamor's ashes,
And hold his memory dear; but death has cancelled
Your mutual bonds; therefore no longer shed
Those fruitless tears, but carry to the altar
A free and cheerful heart; thy God commands,
He calls thee to him; if thou art a Christian,
Now hear his voice.

ALZIRE.

Alas! my lord, I know
A father's power, and know my duty to him,
'Tis to obey, to fall a sacrifice
Before him; I have passed the utmost bounds
Which nature ever prescribed; thy will alone
Hath been my law, nor did I ever stain
With disobedience my true faith, for thee
I left my country's gods, and am a Christian:
Alas! my father, why wouldst thou deceive me,
Why tell me, the new deity I serve
Would bring me peace, that his all-healing power
Would ease my tortured heart? delusive promise!
For O my lord, the deadly poison still
Lurks in my veins, still Zamor's image dwells
In his Alzire's heart, nor time nor death

Can e'er efface it: well I know Alvarez
Condemns that passion which he once approved:
But I will make him ample recompense
By my obedience:—wed me to the tyrant,
Give me to Guzman, 'tis a sacrifice
I owe my country; but remember, sir,
How dreadful 'tis, and tremble at the thought
Of such unnatural, such detested bonds,
Thou who condemnest me to these fatal nuptials,
Who bidst Alzire give her hand to Guzman,
And at the altar promise him a heart
Which is not hers to give.

MONTEZUMA.

What says my child?
O in the name of every tender tie
That binds thee to me, spare a wretched father!
Pity my age, and do not, by the woes
Which thou alone, Alzire, canst remove,
Let me entreat thee, O embitter not
The sad remainder of Alvarez's life!
Have I not ever strove to make thee happy,
And wilt thou not return it? O my daughter,
Let virtue guide thy steps in duty's path,
And lead thee on to bliss! thy country calls,
Wilt thou betray her? learn henceforth, Alzire,
To be the mistress of thyself.

ALZIRE.

And must I
Learn to dissemble then? ungrateful task!

SCENE V.

GUZMAN, ALZIRE.

GUZMAN.

These long delays, Alzire, are unkind,
And, let me add, ungenerous, to the man
Who lives but to oblige you: for thy sake
I stopped the hand of justice; all those captives,
Whose pardon you solicited, are free:
But I should blush to think that Guzman owed
Thy kind compliance to so poor a service;
'Tis on thyself, and thy consenting heart,
He founds his hopes, nor thought I ever till now
My happiness could make Alzire wretched.

ALZIRE.

Wretched indeed! O grant, kind heaven, this day
May not prove fatal to us both! you see
I am abashed, confounded, left a prey
To horror and despair: do not these eyes
Alone betray the anguish of a mind
Oppressed with grief? canst thou not read it there?
I know thou canst: such is my nature, Guzman;
Ne'er did Alzire's face belie her heart:
Dissimulation and disguise, my lord,
Are European arts, which I abhor.

GUZMAN.

I love thy frankness, but lament the cause;
Zamor is still beloved, his memory lives
Within thy breast, my rival even in death:
This is too much, Alzire; duty, honor,
Virtue forbid it: weep no more, it wounds
My heart, and I am jealous of thy tears.

ALZIRE.

Jealous of him, my lord, who in the grave
Is mouldering now, my loved, lamented Zamor?
For I confess I loved him, we were bound
By mutual vows, and still I weep his fate:
If thou art a friend to constancy and truth,
Thou wilt not blame my passion, but approve it.
By this, and this alone, may Guzman gain
Alzire's heart.

SCENE VI.

GUZMAN.

[*Alone.*

Her pride astonishes,
And yet I know not how her freedom charms me:
There is a savage beauty in her heart
That suits the wildness of her native clime;
But softer manners may subdue her mind,
And bind her stubborn fierceness to the yoke
Of duty; Guzman now is lord of all,
And nought remains unconquered but Alzire:
Resolved by force or art to make her mine,
Our hands, if not our hearts, shall be united.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

My noble friends, and fellow-sufferers,
Whom dangers strengthen, and misfortunes make

But more illustrious, shall we ne'er obtain
Our sweet revenge, or honorable death?
Still must we live unable or to serve
Alzire, or our country; shall we never
Find out the hated Guzman, and destroy
That fell destroyer? O my country's gods,
Powerless and vain, ye gave up this fair land
Of liberty to hostile deities;
And tamely suffered a few wandering Spaniards
To spoil your altars, lay your temples waste,
And desolate our empire; I have lost
A kingdom and Alzire; all is gone
But shame, and sorrow, and resentment, those
I carried with me to the burning sands
And gloomy deserts; there I cherished long
The secret hopes of vengeance: you, my friends
Revived your drooping Zamor, and inspired
His soul with flattering thoughts of better days:
Deep in the forest's shade we left a band
Of chosen spirits, resolute and bold,
And hither came, impatient to observe
The walls upraised by our tremendous foe.
They watched, and seized us: in a dungeon long
Confined, at length our tyrant masters grant us
Leave to walk forth, and breathe the wholesome air,
Yet will not deign to let us know our fate:
Can none inform me where we are, who dwells
Within this seat of sorrow? where's Alzire,
Where's Montezuma, lives he, is he free,
Or a vile slave like Zamor? say, my friends,
And partners in affliction, know ye not?

AN AMERICAN.

Like you, my lord, in chains, and hither led
By secret paths, we're ignorant of all:

Great Cacique, worthy of a better fate,
If 'tis decreed that thou must fall, at least
Thou shalt find friends prepared to perish with thee,
And own them not unworthy of their master.

ZAMOR.

After a glorious victory, my friends,
A glorious death is most to be desired;
But O, to die in vile obscurity,
To perish thus in ignominious bondage,
To leave our bleeding country thus enslaved
By European robbers, those assassins
Whose thirst for blood and gold, these proud usurpers,
Who would extort by every cruel art
Of punishment those riches which we hold
More cheap, more worthless than themselves, to leave
My loved Alzire, Zamor's dearer half,
To their licentious fury, O my friends,
'Tis worse than death: I tremble at the thought.

SCENE II.

ALVAREZ, ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ALVAREZ.

Live, and be free.

ZAMOR.

Good heavens, what do I hear?
O unexpected sound! what God art thou
In human shape? a Spaniard, and forgive!
It cannot be: art thou the ruler here?

ALVAREZ.

No, captive; I am only the protector
Of innocence oppressed.

ZAMOR.

Thou good old man,
What is thy office here?

ALVAREZ.

To aid the wretched.

ZAMOR.

What could inspire thee with a thought so noble?

ALVAREZ.

My gratitude, religion, and my God.

ZAMOR.

God and religion! what! these cruel tyrants,
These ruffians, that still bathed in human blood
Depopulate earth, and change the smiling face
Of nature to a dreary desert, they
Who worship avarice alone! their God
Cannot be thine!

ALVAREZ.

It is the same, my son,
But they offend him, they disgrace his name,
And are indeed more guilty; they abuse
Their new-got power: thou knowest their crime, but know
My duty too: twice hath the travelling sun
Enlightened in his course our world and yours
Since a brave Indian, who he was I know not,
Stepped from amidst his fellow-savages,
And saved me from their fury; from that moment
I felt your sorrows, pitied your misfortunes,
And held you as my brethren and my friends;

Could I but meet my kind deliverer,
That gallant stranger, I should die in peace.

ZAMOR.

His age, his features, his transcendent virtue,
All, all conspire to say it is Alvarez:
Behold, and mark us well, canst thou distinguish
The hand that saved thee?

ALVAREZ.

Gracious heaven! come near.
O Providence! it is, it must be he,
The wished-for object of my gratitude;
He whom these eyes, grown dim with age, have sought
So long in vain; my son, my benefactor,
What shall I do to serve thee? thou shalt live
With old Alvarez; he shall be thy father,
Thy guardian and protector here: kind heaven
In gracious pity hath prolonged my days,
That I might pay the debt I owe to thee.

ZAMOR.

O if thy barbarous nation had possessed
But half the virtues that adorn Alvarez,
Our willing world had bowed submissive down
Before them; but their souls are not like thine,
For they delight in blood, whilst nature's self
Abhorring shudders at their cruelty;
Death were more welcome far than life with them:
Urge me not therefore, good Alvarez, all
I wish to know is this, have they destroyed
My noble friend, the wretched Montezuma?
Where's my Alzire's father? O my lord,
Forgive these tears, the memory of past griefs
Sits heavy on me.

ALVAREZ.

Let them flow my son,
'Tis the best mark of our humanity:
The heart that feels not for another's woe
Is fit for every crime: thy friend survives,
And full of years and honors lives with us
In happiness and peace.

ZAMOR.

Might I behold him?

ALVAREZ.

Yes; thou shalt see him soon: may his persuasion
Induce thee to think better of us all,
And follow his example!

ZAMOR.

Can he live
With Christians, Montezuma live with Christians?

ALVAREZ.

Have patience, son, and he shall tell thee all,
Touching our union, and the sacred bonds
That soon shall bind in cords of amity
Our world to thine—but I must to my son,
And let him know my happiness; I leave thee
But for a moment; fare thee well.

SCENE III.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

At last
Heaven seems to smile on Zamor; I have found
Amongst these vile barbarians one just man,

Honest and true: Alvarez is a god,
Sent down from heaven to soften this rude world,
And bless mankind: he said he had a son,
That son shall be my brother and my friend,
If he is worthy of his noble father:
O glorious hope! shall I again behold
Great Montezuma after three long years?
Alzire too, my dear, my loved Alzire,
Shall I embrace thee, hast thou kept thy faith,
That first of virtues, to reward thy Zamor?
The heart oppressed is ever diffident:
Another old man comes this way: my soul
It still perplexed.

SCENE IV.

MONTEZUMA, ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

O noble Montezuma,
Do I once more embrace thee? see thy Zamor
Snatched from the jaws of death; he lives to save
And to defend his prince: behold thy friend,
Thy soldier, and thy son: O where's Alzire?
Be quick, and tell me, let me know her fate,
My life depends on that.

MONTEZUMA.

Unhappy Cacique,
With grief sincere we have lamented thee;
Thy fellow-soldiers to thy memory raised
The decent tomb, and every honor paid
Due to thy virtues: but thank heaven! thou livest,
Henceforth may happier days await thee, Zamor!
But say, why camest thou hither?

ZAMOR.

To avenge
My gods, myself, my father and Alzire.

MONTEZUMA.

What sayst thou?

ZAMOR.

Call to mind that dreadful day
When the fierce Spaniard, terrible in arms,
Rushed through our powerless hosts, o'erthrew our bulwarks,
And laid our empire waste; his name was Guzman:
That name, thou well rememberest, was the signal
Given for destruction; at that name they snatched
The sweet Alzire, thy loved daughter, from me,
And bore her to captivity with thee
And all thy race; destroyed the holy altar,
Where I had hoped to make Alzire mine,
Then dragged me to the tyrant: shall I tell thee
What cruel torments that insatiate monster
Inflicted on me, to extort confession
Of hidden gold, the Christian's deity,
Which we despise and trample on? half-dead
They left me and retired: time, Montezuma,
Can never bury injuries like mine;
Thou seest me here, prepared for great revenge:
Some chosen friends, attached to Zamor's cause,
By equal wrongs provoked, with equal hate
Inspired, await me in the neighboring forest,
Resolved with me to conquer or to die.

MONTEZUMA.

O Zamor, whither would thy headlong passion
Transport thee? wherefore wouldst thou thus pursue
That death which seems so willing to avoid thee?

What can thy friends do for thee? their weak arms,
Their fish-bone spears, their sabres made of stone,
Their soldiers naked, and ill-disciplined,
Against these giants armed with mortal steel,
And launching their dread thunder bolts against thee?
Swift as the winds, their fiery coursers bear them
To certain victory; the world is theirs,
And we, my Zamor, must submit.

ZAMOR.

Whilst life
Shall animate these veins, I never will:
No, Montezuma: their destructive thunder,
Their coats of steel, their fiery coursers taught
Like them to fight, and share their master's glory,
This might affright, and terrify a while
Our gaping savages, but I behold
This pompous scene unruffled: to subdue
Our haughty foe one thing alone's required,
And that is, not to fear them; novelty,
That conquers cowards, only has enslaved us:
Gold, that pernicious native of our soil,
Draws Europe hither, but defends us not
Against her; niggard nature has denied us
A nobler metal, her all-conquering steel,
And given it to barbarians; but kind heaven,
In lieu of this indulgence, hath bestowed
Virtues on us which Europe never knew.
I come to fight and conquer for Alzire.

MONTEZUMA.

Urge it no more, my Zamor, heaven declares
Against us, calm thy rage; the times are changed.

ZAMOR.

Changed, didst thou say, my lord? it cannot be,

If Montezuma's heart is still the same,
If my Alzire's faithful, if I live
Still in her memory.—Thou turnest aside
And weepest.

MONTEZUMA.

Unhappy Zamor!

ZAMOR.

Am I not
Thy son? our tyrants have not altered thee?
They cannot, sure they cannot have corrupted
An old man's heart, and made it false as theirs?

MONTEZUMA.

I am not guilty, Zamor, nor are all
These conquerors tyrants; some were sent by heaven
To guide our footsteps in the paths of truth,
To teach us arts unknown, immortal secrets,
The knowledge of mankind, the arts, my son,
To speak, to think, to live, and to be happy.

ZAMOR.

O horrid! canst thou praise these ruffians, whilst
Thy daughter, thy Alzire, is their slave?

MONTEZUMA.

Zamor, Alzire's free.

ZAMOR.

Ha! Montezuma,
Alzire free? forgive me, but remember,
She's mine, my lord, by every solemn tie;
You promised me, before the gods you promised,
To give her to me; they received our vows;
She is not perjured?

MONTEZUMA.

Call not on those gods,
For they are vain, and fancied idols all;
I have abjured them, and henceforth must worship
That power supreme which hath subdued them.

ZAMOR.

Ha!
The law of thy forefathers, thy religion,
Is that deserted?

MONTEZUMA.

I have found its weakness,
And left its vain chimeras: may the God
Of Gods convert thee, and inspire with truth
Thy unenlightened soul! unhappy Zamor,
Soon mayest thou know that Europe thou condemnest,
Her virtues, and her faith!

ZAMOR.

What mighty virtues
Has she to boast? thou art indeed a slave
If thou hast lost thy gods, thy faith, thy honor,
And broke thy sacred word: Alzire too,
Has she betrayed me? O take heed!

MONTEZUMA.

My heart
Reproaches me for nothing: fare thee well!
I bless my own good fate, and weep for thine.

ZAMOR.

If thou art false, thou hast cause to weep indeed:
Pity the torments which I feel for thee,
And for thy guilt; pity a heart distracted
By love and vengeance; let me find out Guzman

Let me behold Alzire, let me fall
Beneath her feet; O do not hide her from me:
Conduct me, urge me not thus to despair,
Put on a human heart, let thy lost virtue——

SCENE V.

MONTEZUMA, ZAMOR, *Guards.*

GUARD.

[*To Montezuma.*

The ceremony waits, my lord.

MONTEZUMA.

I come.

ZAMOR.

Thou wilt not leave me? tell me, Montezuma,
What ceremony's this.

MONTEZUMA.

No more: away,
And leave this fatal place.

ZAMOR.

Though heaven itself
Forbade me, I would follow thee.

MONTEZUMA.

Forgive
My rude denial, Zamor, but you must not,
I say you must not—guards, prevent him—pagans
Must not profane our Christian altars; I
Command not here, but Guzman speaks by me:
You must obey: farewell.

SCENE VI.

ZAMOR, AMERICANS.

ZAMOR.

What do I hear?
Guzman? O shameful treason! Montezuma
The slave of Guzman! where is virtue fled?
Alzire too, is my Alzire guilty?
Has she too drank corruption's poisonous bowl
From these vile Christians?—that destroyer Guzman
Rules here, it seems; what's to be done?

FIRST AMERICAN.

Permit me
To counsel you, my lord; the good old man
Who saved thee with his son will soon return,
He can deny you nothing; ask of him
Safe conduct to the city gates; that done,
We may return and join our noble friends
Against the foe: I doubt not of success:
We will not spare a man of them except
Alvarez, and his son: I've marked, my lord,
With most observant eye, their fosses, ramparts,
And brazen thunders, European arts
That fright not me: alas! our countrymen
Forge their own shameful chains, and tamely bend
Beneath these sons of pride; but soon, my lord,
When they shall see their great avenger here,
Then will they rise indignant, and destroy
This ignominious work of slavery:
Yes; on the bleeding bodies of our foes
We'll make a path to glory; on the heads

Of these vile Christians turn the fiery tempest,
And with their own destructive instruments
Of murder shake this all-usurping power,
Founded by pride on ignorance and fear.

ZAMOR.

O how I joy, ye great unfortunate,
To find your kindred breasts thus nobly beat
With sympathetic fury! let us punish
The haughty Guzman, let his blood atone
For our lost country's: O thou deity
Of injured mortals, sweet revenge, O come,
Assist thy servants, let but Guzman perish
And we are satisfied! but O my friends,
We talk of vengeance, yet are captives still,
Still groan beneath the yoke of shameful bondage:
Deserted by Alvarez, and betrayed
By Montezuma, all I love perhaps
Is in the power of him whom most I hate,
The only comfort left me is—to doubt.
But hark! what noise is that? the torches flame
On every side, and yield a double day:
This barbarous people's brazen thunder speaks
Some horrid rites, or pompous sacrifice
Preparing; look around, and see if Zamor
Shall save his much-loved friends, or perish with them.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ALZIRE.

[*Alone.*

Ye manes of my dear departed Zamor,

Forgive me, O forgive the wife of Guzman!
The holy altar hath received our vows,
And they are sealed in heaven: pursue me not,
Indignant shade! O if Alzire's tears,
Her bitter anguish, her remorse, the pangs
Of her reluctant soul, can reach the dead,
If in a happier world thou still retainest
Thy generous noble spirit, thou wilt pardon
My weakness; 'twas a father's cruel will,
A people's happiness required it of me;
Could I refuse the dreadful sacrifice?
Thou art at peace, my Zamor, do not thus
Distract my soul, but leave me to my fate;
Alas! already it has cost me dear.

SCENE II.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

And shall I not behold my countrymen,
The loved companions of my infant years,
Those wretched captives, may I not enjoy
The mournful privilege to mix with theirs
My friendly tears, and mourn their cruel fate?

EMIRA.

O madam, we have cause indeed to weep,
To dread the wrath of Guzman, to lament
And tremble for our country; for the hour
Of slaughter and destruction is at hand:
Again I saw the bloody flag displayed,
The proud tribunal's met, and Montezuma
Is summoned to appear: all dreadful omens!
What will become of us?

ALZIRE.

Unpitying heaven!
I've been deceived, betrayed:—cruel O Guzman!
Was it for this I gave him at the altar
My long reluctant hand? that fatal bond
I shall repent of to my latest hour:
O under what malignant star, my father,
Madest thou these cruel, these detested nuptials?

SCENE III.

ALZIRE, EMIRA, CEPHANES.

CEPHANES.

One of those slaves, whom this propitious day
Restored to freedom, begs admittance to you
In secret.

ALZIRE.

Let him enter; 'twill rejoice
My heart to see him; he and all his friends
Are welcome to Alzire: but why comes he
Alone?

CEPHANES.

Some secret labors in his breast,
Which you and only you, he says, must know.
'Twas he, it seems, whose heaven-directed arm
Saved the good father of thy valiant lord,
The noble Guzman.

EMIRA.

He has sought you long;
But Montezuma's private orders were,
He should not see you: melancholy sits

On his dark brow, as if he were intent
On some great purpose.

CEPHANES.

Grief and anguish seem
To rack his soul: at mention of your name
He sighed, and wept, as if yet ignorant
Of your new honors and the rank you bear.

ALZIRE.

Unworthy rank, and honors I despise!
Perhaps the hero knows my wretched race,
And is no stranger to Alzire's woes:
Perhaps he knew my Zamor; who can tell
But he might be a witness of his death,
And comes to tell the melancholy tale?
A dreadful duty! that would but renew
A lover's pangs, and double my distress;
But let him come: I know not why my heart
Should flutter thus; this hateful palace ever
Hath been a scene of sad disquietude
And trouble to me: bid him enter.

SCENE IV.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, EMIRA.

ZAMOR.

Yes;
It is Alzire: is she then restored?

ALZIRE.

Such were his features, voice, and motion: heaven!
It cannot be: O Zamor!—O support me.
[*She faints.*

ZAMOR.

'Tis he.

ALZIRE.

Ha! Zamor at Alzire's feet?
'Tis all delusion.

ZAMOR.

No; I live for thee,
And at thy feet reclaim thy plighted faith;
O my Alzire, idol of my soul,
Wilt thou not hear me? where are all thy vows,
The sacred ties that bound us fast together?
Thou hast not broke them?

ALZIRE.

Thou dear fatal object
Of grief and joy, of rapture and despair,
In what a dreadful moment hast thou chose
To meet Alzire? every word thou utterest
But plunges a new dagger in my heart.

ZAMOR.

Thou weepest, yet lookest on Zamor!

ALZIRE.

'Tis too late:

ZAMOR.

I know you thought me dead: e'er since that hour
Of terror, when those European tyrants
Deprived me of my gods, my throne and thee,
I've been a poor unhappy wanderer.
Knowest thou, my love, that savage murderer, Guzman,
With ignominious stripes, and cruel torture,
Insulted me? the husband of thy choice,
Thy once loved happy Zamor, fell a prey

To ruffians:—how it wounds thy tender heart!
Thou burnest with fierce resentment of my wrongs,
And thou wilt join with Zamor to avenge them:
Some guardian god, propitious to our loves,
Saved me from death, that we might meet again
In happiness: I hope Alzire's true:
Thou hast not left thy gods, betrayed thy country,
Thou art not grown a false perfidious Spaniard?
They tell me I shall meet with Guzman here,
I come to free thee from that proud barbarian:
Thou lovest me, my Alzire, and wilt give
The victim to my wrath.

ALZIRE.

Thou hast been wronged;
Revenge thyself and see thy victim—here.

ZAMOR.

What sayest thou?—ha! thy faith, thy vows—

ALZIRE.

No more,
But strike—I merit not life or thee.

ZAMOR.

O cruel Montezuma! what thou toldest me
Was but too true.

ALZIRE.

And could he tell thee all;
Named he the wretch for whom I quitted Zamor?

ZAMOR.

He did not, durst not name him; that remains
For thee: O speak it: I shall be surprised
At nothing.

ALZIRE.

Hear then all my guilt.

ZAMOR.

Alzire!

ALZIRE.

That Guzman——

ZAMOR.

Gracious heaven!

ALZIRE.

Thy murderer,
Within this hour received my guilty hand;
He is—my husband.

ZAMOR.

Guzman!

ALZIRE.

Montezuma,
Alvarez—they betrayed my easy youth,
And urged me to the deed: the lost Alzire
Did at the Christian altar give up all
That she held dear on earth, her gods, her country,
Her—Zamor: O by those dear injured names
I beg thee, take this hated life.

ZAMOR.

Alzire,
Can it be true? is Guzman then thy husband?

ALZIRE.

To plead a father's undisputed right,
To say how long I struggled with my duty,
To number o'er the fruitless tears I shed
For three long years lamenting Zamor's death,
That still I loved thee, that I left in wrath
Those powerless gods that had deserted thee,
And from despair alone became a Christian,
Perhaps might mitigate Alzire's crime;

But I disdain it, I acknowledge all,
Confess my guilt, and sue for punishment.
Who shall absolve the wretch whom love condemns?
Take then a life that is not worth my care
Without thee; dost thou not abhor me, Zamor?

ZAMOR.

No: if thou lovest me still, thou are not guilty:
May I yet hope that Zamor has a place
In his Alzire's heart?

ALZIRE.

When old Alvarez
And Montezuma led me to the altar
I thought on Zamor, thought him then no more,
But reverenced, but adored his memory:
Our tyrants, our usurpers know I loved thee;
I told them all, told heaven and earth, nay told
My husband—and O take this last farewell,
I love thee still.

ZAMOR.

Is this then our last hour
Of happiness, and must we part so soon,
So lately met? O if the voice of love——

ALZIRE.

'Tis Guzman and his father.

SCENE V.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ZAMOR, ALZIRE, *Attendants.*

ALVAREZ.

[*To Guzman.*

Son, behold
With thy Alzire stands my great preserver,

My benefactor, my deliverer.

[*To Zamor.*

O noble youth, to thee I owe my life,
Let me embrace thee, be my second son,
And share the pleasures of this happy day
With Guzman and Alvarez.

ZAMOR.

He thy son;
Guzman then thy son, that proud barbarian?

ALZIRE.

Avert the terrors of this dreadful moment,
Indulgent heaven!

ALVAREZ.

In what astonishment——

ZAMOR.

How could a father, brave and good, like thee
Be cursed with such a son?

GUZMAN.

Insulting slave,
Who gave thee license thus to spurn thy master?
Thou knowest not who I am.

ZAMOR.

I know thee well;
And thou among the wretches thou hast made
Perhaps mayest one day meet the injured Zamor.

GUZMAN.

And art thou he?

ALVAREZ.

Ha! Zamor!

ZAMOR.

'Tis the same,
'Tis Zamor, whom thy cruel hand oppressed
With ignominious tortures, he whose eye
Thou darest not meet; thou tyrant ravisher,
Comest thou at last to rob me of my best
And dearest treasure? with thy ruthless sword
Make sure thy vengeance, and prevent the fate
Which thou deservest, ere Zamor, who preserved
The father, shall chastise the guilty son.

ALVAREZ.

[*To Guzman.*

What sayest thou, Guzman, canst thou answer this?

GUZMAN.

It were beneath me; punishment alone
Should answer insolence, and, but for thee,
Ere this he should have met with it.

[*Turning to Alzire.*

You, madam,
For your own honor might have more regard,
If not for mine, than thus to parley with
A traitor: come, no more of this, Alzire,
Thy tears offend me: husbands may be jealous;
Remember that and tremble.

ALZIRE.

[*To Guzman.*

Cruel Guzman!
My kind protector,

[*Turning to Alvarez.*

Good Alvarez, hear me:
And thou,

[*To Zamor.*

In better days my dearest hope,
O look with pity on the lost Alzire!

[*Pointing to Zamor.*

Behold the husband whom my father chose;
Long ere this hapless country bowed the neck
To European tyrants, Zamor fell,
So fame reported, and with him Peru,
Then first subdued: my wretched father, old
And full of sorrows, to the Christian's God,
Forsaken by his own, indignant fled;
The Christian altar saw Alzire's hand
Given to her lover's murderer: thy new faith,
Which yet I know not, may condemn Alzire,
But virtue will forgive me when I add,
That still I love thee, Zamor; but my oath,
My marriage vow, rash fatal marriage! says
I never must be thine—nor can I now
Be Guzman's—false to both, ye both have cause
To hate me: which of you will kindly end
My wretched being? Guzman's hand, already
Stained with the blood of my unhappy race,
Were fittest to revenge the injured rights
Of honor and of love; be just for once,
And strike the guilty.

GUZMAN.

Darest thou thus abuse
The goodness thou deservest not? but remember
'Twas thy request; thy punishment is ready:
My rival dies;—away with him.

ALVAREZ.

Inhuman!
O stop, my son, consider what is due
To him who saved thy father—ye are both

My children—let that tender name inspire
Your breasts with pity for an aged father:
At least—

SCENE VI.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ALZIRE, ZAMOR.
DON ALONZO, *a Spanish officer.*

ALONZO.

My lord, the foe is at our gates;
On every side their brazen bucklers ring
With barbarous dissonance: aloud they cry,
Revenge, and Zamor, whilst with measured steps,
Solemn and slow, the close-wedged phalanx moves,
As if these savages had learned from us
The arts by which we conquered them.

GUZMAN.

Away:
Let us be gone; my presence soon shall teach
These slaves their duty—heroes of Castile,
Ye sons of victory, this new world was made
To wear your chains, to fear, and to obey you.

ZAMOR.

To fear and to obey? 'tis false, proud Guzman;
Ye are but mortals like ourselves, no more.

GUZMAN.

Guards, drag him hence.

ZAMOR.

[*To the Spaniards surrounding him.*
Ye dare not: are ye gods,
And must we worship deities thus bathed
In our own blood?

GUZMAN.

Obey me, slaves.

ALZIRE.

My lord!

ALVAREZ.

Remember, son, that Zamor saved thy father.

GUZMAN.

My lord, I shall remember your instructions,
You taught me how to conquer, and I fly
Once more to victory: farewell!

SCENE VII.

ALVAREZ, ALZIRE.

ALZIRE.

[*Kneeling.*

My lord,
Behold me at your feet, accept the homage
Due to thy virtues! Guzman's injured honor
Calls for revenge, Alzire was to blame;
But I was bound to Zamor by the ties
Of sacred love, long ere I knew thy son;
We cannot give our hearts a second time:
Zamor had mine, and ever must preserve it:
O he is good and virtuous, for he saved
Thy life, Alvarez—O forgive me!

ALVAREZ.

Rise
Alzire, I forgive and pity thee;
Feel as a father and a friend thy sorrows,
Lament thy Zamor's fate, and will protect him:

But let the solemn vow thou madest to Guzman
Be graved within thy heart; thou are no longer
The mistress of thyself: remember well
Thou art my daughter—Guzman was most cruel,
I know he was, but still he is—thy husband:
Perhaps he may relent; heaven grant he may!

ALZIRE.

Alas! why art not thou my Zamor's father?

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN.

ALVAREZ.

Fortune, my son, has crowned thee with success,
Endeavor to deserve it; do not stain
The laurel wreath with blood, but let fair mercy,
That adds new lustre to the conqueror's glory,
Inspire thy breast with pity; be a man,
A Christian, and forgive: Alvarez asks thee
To pardon Zamor—shall a father plead
In vain? O Guzman, shall I never soften
Thy savage manners, never teach my son
To conquer hearts?

GUZMAN.

Alvarez has pierced mine
Most deeply; ask my life, and it is yours,
But leave my honor, leave me my revenge;
How can I pardon Zamor, when I know
Alzire loves him?

ALVAREZ.

Therefore he deserves
Thy pity more.

GUZMAN.

O to be pitied thus,
And thus beloved, Guzman would die with pleasure.

ALVAREZ.

With all that fierce resentment, feelest thou too
The pangs of jealousy?

GUZMAN.

And canst thou blame
An injured husband? I have too much cause
For jealousy, and yet thou pitiest not
The unhappy Guzman.

ALVAREZ.

Thou art wild, impetuous,
And bitter in thy wrath; Alzire's virtues
Deserve a milder treatment; when opposed,
Her open heart, rough as her native soil,
Resists with stubborn firmness, but would yield
To soft persuasion; gentle means, my son,
Are ever the most powerful.

GUZMAN.

Must I soothe
The pride of beauty, wear a brow serene,
And cover my resentment, to expose
My easy heart to new indignities?
I should have thought that, jealous of my honor
You would approve, and not condemn my rage:
Is it not shame enough that I am wedded
To a proud slave who hates me, braves my power,

And owns her heart is given to another?
Whom yet, to make me more accursed, I love.

ALVAREZ.

Why blush at that? it is a lawful passion,
Indulge, but keep it within proper bounds,
For all excess is guilty—only promise
You will determine nothing till I've seen her
Once more.

GUZMAN.

A father's will must be obeyed;
I will suspend my wrath, but urge me, sir,
No further.

ALVAREZ.

All I want is time: farewell.

[*Exit.*

GUZMAN.

[*Alone.*

And have I lived to envy Zamor's fate,
To envy a vile slave, who scarce deserves
The name of man!—What do I see? Alzire!

SCENE II.

GUZMAN, ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

'Tis I, my lord, 'tis the afflicted wife
Of Guzman; she who honors, who reveres
And yet has injured thee: I come, my lord,
To throw me at your feet, to own my crime,
And beg forgiveness: nought have I disguised,
My open heart confessed its fatal passion
For the unhappy Zamor; if he dies,

He dies because Alzire was sincere;
But I shall more astonish thee, I come
To plead for him: I know that Guzman's proud,
Resentful, and severe, and yet I hope
He may be generous, 'tis a conqueror's pride,
His glory to forgive: an act like this
Would gain thee more than conquest can bestow,
Win every heart, perhaps even change Alzire's.
A fawning Spaniard might have promised more,
Have sighed, and wept, and softened thee with tears,
Which I disdain; the hand of nature formed
My plain untutored heart, if ought can move it,
'Tis generosity: let Guzman try
If it is made of penetrable mould.

GUZMAN.

If you're so fond of virtue, 'twould become you
To know and practise it, to study, madam,
Those manners you condemn, to learn your duty,
To treat yourself, your honor, and your fame
With more respect; nor dare to name a rival
Whom I abhor, but wait in humble silence
Till I determine what shall be his fate;
It is enough if I forgive Alzire:
This heart is not insensible; but know,
Those who believe shall always find me cruel.

SCENE III.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

EMIRA.

He loves you still, and yet may be persuaded.

ALZIRE.

Ay, but he's jealous, that destroys my Zamor,
I lost his life by asking it; but say,
Emira, canst thou save him? shall he live,
Though far from his Alzire? didst thou try
That soldier?

EMIRA.

Yes; the grand corrupter, gold,
Has bought him to our interest; he is ready.

ALZIRE.

Thank heaven, that metal doth not always prove
The instrument of ill: but haste, Emira.

EMIRA.

Is Zamor then devoted to destruction?
Cannot Alvarez save him? have the council—

ALZIRE.

I have a thousand fears for him: alas!
These tyrants think the world was made for them,
That they were born the sovereigns of mankind,
That Zamor is a rebel and a slave:
Barbarians as they are—this cruel council—
But I'll prevent their murderous purposes:
That soldier, my Emira, how he lingers!

EMIRA.

Be not alarmed; night's friendly shade protects him,
And he will soon be here with Zamor; sleep
Hath closed the tyrant's eyes, and we are safe.

ALZIRE.

O let him lead me to the prison gate
That I may set him free.

EMIRA.

Behold, he comes:
But should ye be discovered, foul dishonor,
Disgrace, and infamy—

ALZIRE.

Attend on her
Who would betray the man she loves; this shame
Thou talkest of is a European phantom,
Which fools mistake for virtue! 'tis the love
Of glory not of justice, not the fear
Of vice but of reproach; a shame unknown
In these untutored climes, where honor shines
In its own native light, and scorns the aid
Of such false lustre; honor bids me save
A lover and a hero thus deserted.

SCENE IV.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, EMIRA, *a soldier.*

ALZIRE.

O Zamor, all is lost, thy punishment
Already is prepared, and thou art doomed
To instant death; lose not a moment's time,
But haste away, this soldier will conduct thee:
Alas! thou seest my grief and my despair,
O save my husband from the guilt of murder,
Save thy dear self, and leave me to my fate.

ZAMOR.

Thou bidst me live, I must obey Alzire:
But wilt thou follow the poor friendless Zamor?

A desert and this heart are all I now
Have left to offer; once I had a throne.

ALZIRE.

What were a throne and empire without thee?
Alas! my Zamor, to the gloomy desert
My soul shall follow thee; but I am doomed
To wander here alone, to drag a life
Of bitterness and woe, to spend my hours
In sad reflections on my wretched state,
To be another's, and yet burn for thee:
I bid farewell to Zamor and to joy;
Away, and leave me to my duty; fain
Would I preserve my honor, and my love,
They both are sacred.

ZAMOR.

What's this idle honor,
This European phantom, that deludes thee;
This Christian altar, those detested oaths
Extorted from thee, this triumphant God;
What have they done to rob me of Alzire?

ALZIRE.

My sacred promise—

ZAMOR.

'Twas a guilty vow,
And binds thee not; perdition on thy oaths,
And thy false God, whom I abhor! farewell!

ALZIRE.

O stop, my Zamor.

ZAMOR.

Guzman is thy husband.

ALZIRE.

Do not upbraid but pity me.

ZAMOR.

O think

On our past loves.

ALZIRE.

I think but on thy danger.

ZAMOR.

Thou hast betrayed me.

ALZIRE.

No; I love thee still:
If 'tis a crime, I own, nay glory in it;
But hence, and leave me here to die alone;
Some dreadful purpose labors in thy breast:
How thy eyes roll! O Zamor—

ZAMOR.

'Tis resolved.

ALZIRE.

Where art thou going?

ZAMOR.

Glorious liberty,

I'll use thee nobly.

ALZIRE.

If thou diest remember

I perish with thee.

ZAMOR.

In this hour of terror
Thou talkest to me of love: but time is precious,
Conduct me, soldier; fare thee well.

SCENE V.

ALZIRE.

He's gone;
But where I know not: dreadful moment! Guzman,
For thee I quitted Zamor: haste, Emira,
Follow him, fly, return, and tell me all.
Thinkest thou that soldier will be faithful to us?
[*Exit Emira.*
I know not why, but something tells me here,
This day, for me, will be a day of horror.
O God of Christians, thou all-conquering power,
Whom yet I know not, O remove the cloud
From my dark mind; if by my fatal passion
I have offended thee, pour all thy vengeance
On me, but spare my Zamor; O conduct
His wandering footsteps through the dreary desert!
Is Europe only worthy of thy care?
Art thou the partial parent of one world,
And tyrant o'er another? all deserve
Thy equal love, the victor and the vanquished
Are all the work of thy creating hand.
But hark! what dreadful cry is that? methought
They called on Zamor—hark! again that noise!
It comes this way: my Zamor's lost.

SCENE VI.

ALZIRE, EMIRA.

ALZIRE.

Emira,
I'm glad thou art come: what hast thou seen, what done?
Where is he? speak, and ease my troubled soul.

EMIRA.

O it is past all hope; he cannot live:
Conducted safely by the faithful soldier
He passed the guards, then darting from him rushed
Towards the palace; trembling I pursued him,
Amidst the horrors of the silent night,
Almost to Guzman's chamber; there he escaped me,
Though oft I called on him, oft looked in vain:
I heard a dreadful shriek, some cried aloud,
He's dead: the palace is in arms: fly, madam,
And save yourself.

ALZIRE.

Let us begone, and help
My Zamor.

EMIRA.

What can we do for him?

ALZIRE.

Die.

SCENE VII.

ALZIRE, EMIRA, DON ALONZO, *Guards.*

ALONZO.

I've orders, madam, to secure you.

ALZIRE.

Slave,
What meanest thou? where's my Zamor?

ALONZO.

That I know not:
Permit me to conduct you.

ALZIRE.

Cruel fate!
I must not die then? Zamor is no more,
And yet I live, a captive, and in chains:
O ignominious!—dost thou weep, barbarian?
I must indeed be wretched, if my woes
Can touch a heart like thine; I'll follow thee;
If death awaits me, I obey with pleasure.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

ALZIRE, *Guards.*

ALZIRE.

Prepare your tortures, you who call yourselves
The judges of mankind; why am I left
In dread suspense, uncertain of my fate?
To live, or die? if I but mention Zamor
The guards around me tremble, and look pale,
His very name affrights them.

SCENE II.

MONTEZUMA, ALZIRE.

ALZIRE.

Ha! my father!

MONTEZUMA.

O my Alzire, what a scene of woe
Hath thy imprudent fatal passion brought

Among us! we were pleading for thy Zamor,
The good Alvarez had well nigh prevailed,
When on a sudden an armed soldier rushed
With violence in, and bore down all before him;
'Twas Zamor's self; with fury in his aspect,
And wild distraction, on he sprang to Guzman,
Attacked, and plunged the dagger in his breast:
The blood that issued from your husband's wound
Gushed on your father: Zamor then resigned,
With calm submission at Alvarez's feet
Fell humble; "take," he cried, "this guilty sword,
Stained with thy Guzman's blood, I am revenged;
Now nature calls on thee to do thy duty,
As I have mine; strike here;" then bared his breast
To the expected blow: the good Alvarez
Sunk breathless in my arms; confusion followed
And cries and horror; Guzman's friends upraised him,
Bound up his wounds, and tried by every art
Of medicine to preserve his life; the people
Accuse thee as accomplice in the deed,
And call for justice on thee.

ALZIRE.

And couldst thou——

MONTEZUMA.

O no; my heart suspects thee not, Alzire,
Thy soul I know is capable of error,
But not of guilt: alas! thou didst not see
The precipice before thee: Guzman dies
By Zamor's hand, thy husband by thy lover;
They will condemn thee to a shameful death,
But I will try if possible to move
The council in thy favor.

ALZIRE.

Do not sue
For me, my father, of these cruel tyrants,
Let but Alvarez live, and love me still,
I ask no more: Guzman's untimely fate
I must lament, because 'twas horrible,
Because, more dreadful still, he had deserved it:
Zamor avenged his wrongs, I cannot blame
Nor can I praise him for it; he must die;
Alzire wishes but to follow him.

ALVAREZ.

O heaven, assist me in this work of mercy!

SCENE III.

ALZIRE.

Now end all gracious power, this wretched being!
Alas! Alzire, the new God thou servest
Withholds thy hand, and says thou must not finish
Thy hated life; the deities I left
Denied me not the privilege to die.
Is it a crime to hasten on, perhaps
A few short years, the universal doom
Appointed for us all? and must we drink
The bitter cup of sorrow to the dregs?
In this vile body is there aught so sacred
That the free spirit should not leave at will
Its homely mansion? this all-conquering nation,
Shall they depopulate earth, destroy my race,
Condemn Alzire, and I not be mistress
Of my own life? Barbarians! Zamor then
Must die in tortures.

SCENE IV.

ZAMOR *in chains,* ALZIRE, *Guards.*

ZAMOR.

Yes, it is decreed:
We both must die; beneath the specious name
Of justice, the tribunal hath condemned us;
Guzman yet lives, my erring hand had left
Its work unfinished; the barbarian lives
To glut his vengeance with Alzire's blood,
To taste a tyrant's savage joy, and see us
Perish together—to pronounce our doom
Alvarez comes: I am the guilty cause;
Thou diest for me, Alzire.

ALZIRE.

Then no more,
For death is welcome if it comes with Zamor:
O bless the happy hour that shall dissolve
My ties to Guzman; I may love thee now
Without a crime, without remorse; receive
The heart that's due to thee, and thee alone:
Yon dreadful scaffold, for our death prepared,
Shall be the altar of my love; there, Zamor,
I'll offer up my faith, and expiate there
My crime of infidelity—the worst
Of all our sentence is, that it must come
From good Alvarez.

ZAMOR.

See, he's here; his cheeks
Are bathed in tears.

ALZIRE.

Alas! who most deserves
Compassion? this will be a dreadful parting.

SCENE V.

ALZIRE, ZAMOR, ALVAREZ, *Guards.*

ZAMOR.

From you we both expect to hear our fate,
Pronounce it, we are not afraid to die:
Zamor deserves it, he has slain thy son,
The son of good Alvarez, of my friend;
But what, my lord, has this fair innocent,
What has Alzire done? thou art not cruel,
Proud, and revengeful, like thy countrymen,
Distinguished by thy clemency, we loved
Alvarez; wilt thou give up the fair title
Of just and good, and bathe thee in the blood
Of innocence?

ALZIRE.

Avenge thyself, avenge
Thy son; but do not thus condemn the guiltless:
I am the wife of Guzman, that alone
Should tell thee, I would save, and not betray him,
Even though I hated, I respected him,
And swerved not from my faith, thou knowest I did not:
Careless of what the slandering multitude
May think, I rest my character on thee;
Acquitted by Alvarez, for the rest
'Tis equal all: if Zamor dies, Alzire
Must go with him: I pity thee alone.

ALVAREZ.

Amazing scene of tenderness and horror!
That he should be the murderer of my son
Who was my kind deliverer! O Zamor,
To thee I owe a life which I abhor;
It was a fatal gift, and bought too dear:
I am a father, yet I am a man;
Spite of a parent's grief that cries aloud
For vengeance on thee, gratitude pleads strongly;
She will be heard:—and thou who wert my daughter,
Whom yet I call by that dear tender name;
Think not I joy in the inhuman pleasure
Of fell revenge; I lose a friend, I lose
A daughter, and a son: the council dooms thee
To death, and bids a wretched father pass
The cruel sentence; I could not refuse
The dreadful task, and now am come, my children,
To save you both: it is in Zamor's power.

ZAMOR.

To save Alzire? say, what's to be done?

ALVAREZ.

Believe in Him who now inspires Alvarez;
One word will change your fate: the law decrees,
Whoe'er becomes a Christian meets forgiveness,
The God of pardon will himself o'ershade
Thy every crime, and take thee to his mercy;
Spain will protect and love thee as a brother;
Alzire shall be safe, ye both shall live;
I'll answer for her life as for thy own;
Zamor, to thee I speak; of thee I ask
Another life, I owe thee one already;
A father asks thee only to be happy,
To be a Christian, and to save Alzire.

ALZIRE.

What says my love? say, should we purchase life
So dearly? Shall I quit my gods for Guzman's,
And be a traitor? tell me, thou sage tyrant,
When I was master of thy fate, wouldst thou,
Had Zamor sued, have quitted thy own gods
For mine?

ALVAREZ.

I should have done as now I do,
Implored the almighty being to enlighten
A heart like thine, and make thee a true Christian.

ZAMOR.

O cruel contest! what am I to choose,
Or life or death, Alzire, or my gods,
Which must I leave? Alzire, 'tis thy cause,
Determine it; I think thou wouldst not bring
Dishonor on thy Zamor.

ALZIRE.

Hear me then:
Thou knowest that, to obey a father's will,
I gave another what to thee alone
I had devoted; I embraced his faith,
And worshipped Montezuma's God; perhaps
It was the error of my easy youth,
And thou wilt blame me for it; but methought
The law of Christians was the law of truth,
And therefore only did I make it mine
But to renounce those gods our heart adores;
That is no venial error, but a crime
Of deepest die; it is to give up both,
The God we worship, and the God we leave;
'Tis to be false to heaven, to the world,
And to ourselves: no, Zamor, if thou diest,

Die worthy of Alzire; hear the voice
Of conscience; act as she alone directs thee.

ZAMOR.

Thou hast determined as I thought thou wouldst,
Zamor shall die with honor.

ALVAREZ.

Then ye scorn
Our proffered mercy: hark! those mournful cries—

SCENE VII.

ALVAREZ, GUZMAN, ZAMOR, AMERICANS, *soldiers.*

ZAMOR.

O save Alzire; let me perish.

ALZIRE.

No:
I will be joined to Guzman, and to thee.

ALVAREZ.

My son is in the agonies of death;
O Guzman, hear me.

ZAMOR.

Look on Zamor, learn
Of him to die.

GUZMAN.

[*To Zamor.*

Perhaps I may teach thee
Another lesson: I have owed the world

A good example long, and now I mean
To pay the debt.

[*Turning to Alvarez.*

My soul is on the wing,
And ere she takes her flight but waits to see
And imitate Alvarez; O my father,
The mask is off, death has at last unveiled
The hideous scene, and showed me to myself;
New light breaks in on my astonished soul:
O I have been a proud, ungrateful being,
And trampled on my fellow-creatures: heaven
Avenges earth: my life can never atone
For half the blood I've shed: prosperity
Had blinded Guzman, death's benignant hand
Restores my sight; I thank the instrument
Employed by heaven to make me what I am.
A penitent: I yet am master here;
And yet can pardon: Zamor, I forgive thee,
Live and be free; but O remember how
A Christian acted, how a Christian died.

[*To Montezuma, who kneels to him.*

Thou, Montezuma, and ye hapless victims
Of my ambition, say my clemency
Surpassed my guilt, and let your sovereigns know,
That we were born your conquerors.

[*To Zamor.*

Observe
The difference, Zamor, 'twixt thy God and mine:
Thine teach thee to revenge an injury,
Mine to forgive and pity thee.

ALVAREZ.

My son,
Thy virtue's equal to thy courage.

ALZIRE.

Heaven!
How wonderful a change! amazing goodness!

ZAMOR.

Thou wilt oblige me to repent.

GUZMAN.

Yes, Zamor,
I will do more, thou shalt admire and love me:
Guzman too long hath made Alzire wretched,
I'll make her happy; with my dying hand
I give her to thee, live and hate me not,
Restore your country's ruined walls, and bless
My memory.

[*To Alvarez.*

Alvarez, be once more
A father to them, let the light of heaven
Shine forth upon them; Zamor is thy son,
Let him repair my loss.

ZAMOR.

Amazed, confounded,
And motionless I stand; can Christians boast
Of such exalted virtue? 'twas inspired
By heaven; the Christian's law must be divine:
Friendship, and faith, and constancy I knew
Already; but this soars above them all:
I must indeed admire and love thee, Guzman

[*Falls at his feet.*

ALZIRE.

My lord, permit me to embrace thy knees:
O I could die for Guzman; will you then
Forgive my weakness?

GUZMAN.

Yes: I pardon all,
I cannot see thee weep and not forgive thee.
Come near, my father, take my last farewell!

[*Dies.*

ALVAREZ.

[*To Montezuma.*

I see the hand of God in all our woes,
And humbly bend myself before that power
Who wounds to heal, and strikes but to forgive.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

ORESTES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ÆGISTHUS.

ORESTES, Son of Agamemnon and Clytemnæstra.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, } Sisters of Orestes.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, Wife of Ægisthus.

PYLADES, Friend of Orestes.

PAMMENES, an old Man, attached to the Family of Agamemnon.

DIMAS, an Officer of the Guards.

ATTENDANTS.

SCENE, the seashore, a wood, a temple, a palace and a tomb, on one side: on the other, Argos at a distance.

ORESTES.

"Orestes" was produced in 1750, an experiment which intensely interested the literary world and the public. In his Dedicatory Letters to the Duchess of Maine, Voltaire has the following passage on the Greek drama:

"We should not, I acknowledge, endeavor to imitate what is weak and defective in the ancients: it is most probable that their faults were well known to their contemporaries. I am satisfied, Madam, that the wits of Athens condemned, as well as you, some of those repetitions, and some declamations with which Sophocles has loaded his *"Electra:"* they must have observed that he had not dived deep enough into the human heart. I will moreover fairly confess, that there are beauties peculiar not only to the Greek language, but to the climate, to manners and times, which it would be ridiculous to transplant hither. Therefore I have not copied exactly the *"Electra"* of Sophocles—much more I knew would be necessary; but I have taken, as well as I could, all the spirit and substance of it. The feast celebrated by *Ægisthus* and *Clytemnæstra,* which they called the feast of Agamemnon; the arrival of *Orestes* and *Pylades;* the urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of *Orestes;* the ring of *Agamemnon;* the character of *Electra,* and that of *Iphisa,* which is exactly the *Chrysothemis* of Sophocles; and above all, the remorse of *Clytemnæstra;* these I have copied from the Greek tragedy. When the messenger, who relates the fictitious story of the death

of *Orestes,* says to *Clytemnœstra:* 'I see, Madam, you are deeply affected by his death;' she replies, 'I am a mother, and must therefore be unhappy; a mother, though injured, cannot hate her own offspring:' she even endeavors to justify herself to *Electra,* with regard to the murder of *Agamemnon,* and laments her daughter. Euripides has carried *Clytemnœstra's* repentance still further. This, Madam, was what gained the applause of the most judicious and sensible people upon earth, and was approved by all good judges in our own nation. No character, in reality, can be more natural than that of a woman, criminal with regard to her husband, yet softened by her children; a woman, whose proud and fiery disposition is still open to pity and compassion, who resumes the fierceness of her character on receiving too severe reproaches, and at last sinks into submission and tears. The seeds of this character were in Sophocles and Euripides, and I have only unfolded them. Nothing but ignorance, and its natural attendant, presumption, can assert that the ancients have nothing worthy of our imitation: there is scarcely one real and essential beauty and perfection, for the foundation of which, at least, we are not indebted to them.

"I have taken particular care not to depart from that simplicity so strongly recommended by the Greeks, and so difficult to attain; the true mark of genius and invention, and the very essence of all theatrical merit. A foreign character, brought into "*Œdipus*" or "*Electra,*" who should play a principal part and draw aside the attention of the audience, would be a monster in the eyes of all those who have any knowledge of the ancients, or of that nature which they have so finely painted. Art and genius

consist in finding everything within the subject, and never going out of it in search of additional ornaments: but how are we to imitate that truly tragic pomp and magnificence which we find in the verses of Sophocles, that natural elegance and purity of diction, without which the piece, howsoever well conducted in other respects, must after all be but a poor performance!

"I have at least given my countrymen some idea of a tragedy without love, without confidants, and without episodes: the few partisans of good taste acknowledge themselves obliged to me for it, though the rest of the world withhold their approbation for a time, but will come in at last, when the rage of party is over, the injustice of persecution at an end, and the clouds of ignorance dissipated. You, Madam, must preserve among us those glittering sparks of light which the ancients have transmitted to us; we owe everything to them: not an art was born among us: everything was transplanted: but the earth that bears these foreign fruits is worn out, and our ancient barbarism, by the help of false taste, would break out again in spite of all our culture and improvement: and the disciples of Athens and Rome become Goths and Vandals, corrupted with the manners of the *Sybarites,* without the kind favor and protection of persons of your rank. When nature has given them either genius, or the love of genius, they encourage this nation, which is better able to imitate than to invent; and which always looks up towards the great for those instructions and examples which it perpetually stands in need of. All that I wish for, Madam, is, that some genius may be found to finish what I have but just sketched out; to free the stage from that effeminacy and

affectation which it is now sunk into; to render it respectable to the gravest characters; worthy of the few great masterpieces which we already have among us; worthy, in short, the approbation of a mind like yours, and all those who may hereafter endeavor to resemble you."

ORESTES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

IPHISA, PAMMENES.

IPHISA.

Sayest thou, Pammenes? shall these hated walls,
Where I so long have dragged a life of woe,
Afford at least the melancholy comfort
Of mingling sorrow with my dear Electra?
And will Ægisthus bring her to the tomb
Of Agamemnon, bring his daughter here,
To be a witness of the horrid pomp,
The sad solemnity, which on this day
Annual returns, to celebrate their crimes,
And make their guilt immortal?

PAMMENES.

O Iphisa,
Thou honored daughter of my royal master,
Like thee, confined within these lonely walls,
The secrets of a vile abandoned court
Do seldom reach Pammenes; but, 'tis rumored,
The jealous tyrant brings Electra here,
Fearful lest Argos, by her cries alarmed,
Should rise to vengeance; every heart, he knows,
Feels for the injured princess, therefore much
He dreads her clamors; with a watchful eye
Observes her conduct, treats her as a slave,
And leads the captive to adorn his triumph.

IPHISA.

Good heaven! and must Electra be a slave!
Shall Agamemnon's blood be thus disgraced
By a barbarian? Will her cruel mother,
Will Clytemnæstra bear the vile reproach
That on herself recoils, and all her race?
Perhaps my sister is too fierce of soul,
She mingles too much pride and bitterness
Of keen resentment with her griefs; alas!
Weak are her arms against a tyrant's power:
What will her anger, what her pride avail her?
They only irritate a haughty foe,
And cannot serve our cause: my fate at least
Is milder, and this solitary state
Shields me from wrongs which must oppress
Electra.
Far from my father's foes, these pious hands
Can pay due offerings to his honored shade:
Far from his murderer, in this sad retreat
Freely I weep in peace, and curse Ægisthus:
I'm not condemned to see the tyrant here,
Save when the Sun unwillingly brings round
The fatal day that knit the dreadful tie,
When that inhuman monster shed the blood
Of Agamemnon, when base Clytemnæstra——

SCENE II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAMMENES.

IPHISA.

O my Electra! art thou here? my sister—

ELECTRA.

The day of horror is returned, Iphisa:
The dreadful rites, the guilty feast prepared,
Have brought me hither; thy Electra comes,
Thy captive sister, comes a wretched slave,
To bear the tidings of their guilty joy.

IPHISA.

To see Electra is a blessing still,
It pours some joy into the bitter cup
Of sorrow, thus to mix my tears with thine.

ELECTRA.

Tears, my Iphisa! I have shed enough
Of them already: O thou bleeding ghost
Of my dead father, ever-honored shade,
Is that the tribute which I owe to thee?
I owe thee blood, and blood thou hast required;
Amidst the pomp of this dire festival,
Dragged by Ægisthus here, I will collect
My scattered spirits, shake off these vile chains,
And be my own avenger: yes, Iphisa,
This feeble arm shall reach the tyrant's heart:
Did not the cruel Clytemnæstra shed
A husband's blood? did I not see her lift
Her barbarous hand against him, and shall we
Suspend the blow, and let a murderer live?
O vengeance, and thou, animating virtue,
That dost inspire me, art thou not as bold
As daring guilt? we must revenge ourselves,
We must, Iphisa: fearest thou then to strike,
Fearest thou to die? shall Clytemnæstra's daughter,
The blood of Atreus fear? O rather lend
Thy aid, and join the desperate Electra!

IPHISA.

My dearest sister, moderate thy rage,
And calm thy troubled mind: against our foes
What can we bring but unavailing tears?
Who will assist us? who will lend us arms?
Or how shall we surprise a watchful king,
For guilt is ever fearful, by his guards
Surrounded? why, Electra, wilt thou court
Perpetual danger? should the tyrant hear
Thy loud complaints, I tremble for thy life.

ELECTRA.

Why let him hear them? I would have my grief
Sink to his heart, and poison all his joys:
Yes; I would have my cries ascend to heaven,
And bring the thunder down; would have them raise
A hundred kings, who never yet have dared,
Unworthy cowards as they are, to avenge
Great Agamemnon: but I pardon thee,
And the vain terrors of thy fearful soul,
That shrinks at danger; for he favors you,
I know he does, and only crushes me
Beneath his iron yoke: thou hast not been,
Like me, a wretched persecuted slave;
Thou didst not see the impious parricide,
The horrid[1] feast, the dire solemnity,

[1] Nothing could add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytemnæstra, not content with murdering her husband, instituted a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and called it, with cruel raillery, "the supper of Agamemnon." Dinias, in his "History of Argos," informs us, it was on the thirteenth of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

When Clytemnæstra—O the dreadful image
Is still before me, in this place, Iphisa,
Where now thou tremblest to declare thy wrongs,
There did these eyes behold our hapless father
Caught in the deadly snare: Pammenes heard
His dying groans, and ran with me to save him:
But when I came, what did I see! my mother
Plunging her ruthless dagger in his breast,
To rob him of the poor remains of life.

[*Turning to Pammenes.*

Thou sawest me take Orestes in my arms,
My dear Orestes; little knew he then
Of danger, but as near his murdered father
He stood, called out for aid to Clytemnæstra:
She, midst the horrors of the guilty scene,
Stopped for a moment short, and gave us time
Safe to convey the victim from Ægisthus.
Whether the tyrant has completed yet
The imperfect vengeance in Orestes' blood,
I know not: O my brother, dost thou live,
Or hast thou followed thy unhappy father?
Alas! I weep for him, and fear for thee.
These hands are loaded with inglorious chains,
And these sad eyes, forever bathed in tears,
See naught but guilt, oppression, and despair.

PAMMENES.

Ye dear remains of Atreus' honored race,
Whose splendor I have seen, whose woes I feel,
Permit a friend to fill your weeping souls
With cheerful hope, that ever waits propitious
To soothe affliction: call to mind what heaven
Long since hath promised, that its vengeful hand
Should one day lead Orestes to the place
Where we preserved him; that Ægisthus there,

Even at yon tomb, and on the fatal day
Marked for his impious triumph o'er the dead,
Should pay the forfeit of his crime: the Gods
Can ne'er deceive; in darkness still they veil
Their secret purpose from the eyes of men,
And punishment with slow but certain steps,
Still follows guilt.

IPHISA.

But wherefore stays so long
Their tardy vengeance? I have languished here
In grief and anguish many a tedious hour;
Electra, still more wretched, is in chains:
Meantime the proud oppressor lives in peace,
And glories in his crimes.

ELECTRA.

Thou seest, Pammenes,
Ægisthus still renews his cruel triumph,
And celebrates the fatal nuptials; still
A wretched exile lives my dear Orestes,
Forgetful of his father, and Electra.

PAMMENES.

But mark the course of time: he touches now
The age when manly strength, with courage joined,
May aid your purpose; hope for his return,
And trust in heaven.

ELECTRA.

We will: thou son of wisdom,
Thou good old man, O thou hast darted forth
A ray of hope on my despairing soul!
If with unpitying eye the gods beheld
Our miseries here, and proud oppression, still
Unpunished, trampled on the tender feet
Of innocence, what hand would crown their altars

With incense and oblation! but kind heaven
Will give Orestes to a sister's arms,
And blast the tyrant: hear my voice, Orestes,
O hear thy country's, hear the cries of blood,
That call thee forth; come from thy dreary caves,
And pathless deserts, where misfortune long
Hath tried thy courage; leave thy savage prey,
And all the roaming monsters of the forest,
To chase the beasts of Argos, to destroy
The tyrants of the earth, the murderers
Of kings; O haste, and let me guide thy hand
Even to the traitor's breast.

IPHISA.

No more: repress
Thy griefs, Electra; see, thy mother comes.

ELECTRA.

And have I yet a mother?

SCENE III.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Hence, and leave me;
You may retire, Pammenes; stay, my daughters.

IPHISA.

Alas! that sacred name dispels my fears.

ELECTRA.

And doubles mine.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Touching your fate, my children,
I came to lay a mother's heart before you.

Barren, thank heaven, hath been my second bed,
Nor brought a race of jealous foes to sow
Division here. Alas! my little race
Is almost run; the secret grief that long
Hath preyed on my sad heart will finish soon
A life of woe: spite of Ægisthus, still
I love my children; spite of all his rage,
Electra, thou who in thy infant years
So oft hast given me comfort, when the loss
Of Iphigenia, and her cruel father
Oppressed my soul; though now thy pride disdains
me,
And braves my power, thou art my daughter still;
Unworthy as thou art, there's still a place
In Clytemnæstra's heart for her Electra.

ELECTRA.

For me! O heaven, and am I yet beloved;
And dost thou feel for thy unhappy daughter?
O, if thou dost, behold her chains, behold
Yon tomb——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Unkind Electra, thus to wake
The sad remembrance! thou hast plunged a dagger
Into thy mother's breast; but I deserve it.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast disarmed Electra, nature pleads
A mother's cause; I own myself to blame
For all the bitterness of sorrow poured
In dreadful execrations on thy head.
By thee delivered to the tyrant's power,
I would have torn thee from him; I lament,
But cannot hate thee. O, if gracious heaven
Hath touched thy soul with wholesome penitence,
Obey its sacred will, and hear the voice

Of conscience, that commands thee to unloose
The horrid ties that bind thee to a wretch
Despised and hated; follow the great God
Who leads thy footsteps to the paths of virtue;
Call back your son, let him return to fill
The throne of his great ancestors, to scourge
A tyrant, to avenge his murdered father,
His sisters, and his mother: haste and send
For my Orestes.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Talk no more of that,
Electra, nor speak thus of my Ægisthus:
I grieve to see thee in these shameful bonds;
But know, a sovereign cannot tamely brook
Repeated insults, or embrace a foe:
You had provoked him to be cruel; I,
Who am but his first subject, oft have tried
To soothe his anger, but in vain: my words,
Instead of healing, but inflamed the wound:
Electra is indebted to herself
For all her deep-felt injuries; henceforth bend
To thy condition; let thy sister teach thee
That we must yield submissive to our fate,
If e'er we hope to change it. I could wish
To end my days in peace amongst my children;
But if thy rapid and imprudent zeal
Should bring Orestes here before the time,
His life might answer for it, and thy own,
If the king see him: though I pity thee,
Electra, yet I owe a husband more
Than a lost son, whom I have cause to fear.

ELECTRA.

O heaven, that monster! he thy husband, he!
And is it thus thou pitiest me? alas,

What will this poor, this light remorse avail thee,
This fleeting sorrow? was thy tenderness
But for a moment, dost thou threaten me,
[*To Iphisa.*
Is this, Iphisa, this a mother's love?
[*To Clytemnæstra.*
It seems thou threatenest my Orestes too;
Thou hast no cause to fear, nor I to hope
For him: alas! perhaps he is no more;
Perhaps Ægisthus, the detested tyrant,
He whom but now thou didst not blush to call
Thy husband, hath in secret ta'en his life.

IPHISA.

Believe me, Madam, when I call the gods
To witness, poor Electra and myself
Are strangers to the fate of dear Orestes;
Have pity then on your afflicted daughter,
Pity your helpless son and spare Electra:
She has been wronged; her tears and her reproaches
Suit well her fate, and ought to be forgiven.

ELECTRA.

I must not hope it, must not even complain;
And if Orestes lives but in my thoughts
'Tis deemed a crime. I know Ægisthus well,
Know his fierce nature; if he fears my brother,
He'll soon destroy him.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Know, thy brother lives;
If he's in danger, 'tis from thy imprudence;
Therefore be humble, moderate thy transports,
Respect thy mother: thinkest thou I come here,
Elate with joy, to lead the splendid triumph?
O no, to me it is a day of sorrow;

Thou weepest in chains, and I upon a throne.
I know the cruel vows thy hatred made
Against me: O, Electra! cease thy prayers,
The gods have heard thee but too well already:
Retire, and leave me.

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Alone.*

How it shocks my soul
To see my children! O the guilty bed!
My fatal marriage, and long prosperous crimes,
Adultery and murder, horrid bonds!
How ye torment me now! my little dream
Of happiness is o'er, and conscience darts
Its sudden rays on my affrighted soul.
How can Ægisthus live so long in peace!
Fearless he leads me on to share with him
These cruel triumphs; but my spirits fail,
My strength forsakes me, and I tremble now
At every omen; fear my subjects, fear
All Argos, Greece, Electra, and Orestes.
How dreadful 'tis to hate the blood that flowed
Congenial with our own, to dread the names
Which mortals hold so sacred and so dear!
But injured nature, banished from my heart,
Indignant frowns, and to avenge herself
Now bids me tremble at the name of son.

SCENE V.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Cruel Ægisthus, wherefore wouldst thou lead me
To this sad place, the seat of death and horror?

ÆGISTHUS.

Is then the solemn pomp, the feast of joy,
The sweet remembrance of our prosperous days,
Grown hateful to thee? is our marriage day
A day of horror?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

No: but here, Ægisthus,
There may be danger: my unhappy children
Have filled this heart with anguish: poor Iphisa
Weeps her hard lot; Electra is in chains;
This fatal place reminds me of the blood
We shed, reminds me of my dear Orestes,
Of Agamemnon.

ÆGISTHUS.

Let Iphisa weep,
And proud Electra rave; I bore too long
Her bitter taunts, 'tis fit her haughtiness
Should now be humbled; I'll not suffer her
To stir up foul rebellion in my kingdom,
To tell the factions that Orestes comes,
And call down vengeance on me; every hour
That hated name is echoed in my ear,
I must not bear it.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Ha! what name was that?
Orestes! O, I shudder at the thought
Of his approach: an oracle long since
Declared, that here, even at the fatal tomb
Whither thou leadest, his parricidal hand
Should one day rise vindictive, and destroy us.
Why therefore wouldst thou tempt the gods, why thus
Expose a life so dear to Clytemnæstra?

ÆGISTHUS.

Be not alarmed; Orestes ne'er shall hurt thee:
His be the danger; for I have sent forth
Some friends in search of him, and soon I hope
Shall see him in the toils; a wretched exile
From clime to clime he roams, and now it seems
In Epidaurus' gloomy forest hides
His ignominious head; but there perhaps
We have more friends than Clytemnæstra thinks of;
The king may serve us.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But, my son——

ÆGISTHUS.

I know
He's fierce, implacable, revengeful; stung
By his misfortunes, all the blood of Atreus
Boils in his breast, and animates his rage.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! my lord, his rage is but too just.

ÆGISTHUS.

Be it our business then to make it vain;
Thou knowest I've sent my Plisthenes in secret
To Epidaurus.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But for what?

ÆGISTHUS.

To fix
My throne in safety, and remove thy fears:
Yes, Plisthenes, my son, by thee adopted
Heir to my kingdom, knows too well how much
His interest must depend on the event
E'er to neglect his charge: he is thy son,
Think of no other: had Electra's heart
Submissive yielded to another's counsels,
She had been happy in my Plisthenes:
But she shall feel the power which she contemns,
She and her haughty brother, her Orestes,
He may be found perhaps.——You seem disturbed.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! Ægisthus, must we sacrifice
More victims? must I purchase length of days
With added guilt? Thou knowest whose blood we shed——
And must my son too perish, must I pay
So dear a price for life?

ÆGISTHUS.

Remember——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

No:
First let me ask the sacred oracle——

ÆGISTHUS.

What canst thou hope from gods or oracles,
Were they consulted on the blissful day
That gave Ægisthus to his Clytemnæstra?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Thou hast recalled a time when heaven, I fear,
Was much offended: love defies the gods,
But fear adores them; guilt weighs down my soul,
Do not oppress my feeble spirits; time,
That changes all, hath altered this proud heart;
The hand of heaven is on me, and subdues
The haughty rage that once inspired my breast;
Not that my tender friendship for Ægisthus
Can e'er decay, our interests are the same;
But to behold my daughter made a slave,
To think on my poor lost abandoned son,
To think that now, even now, perhaps he dies
By vile assassins, or, if living, lives
My foe, and hates the guilty Clytemnæstra,
Is it not dreadful? pity me, Ægisthus,
I am a mother still.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou art my wife;
Thou art my queen; resume thy wonted courage,
And be thyself again; indulge no more
This foolish fondness for ungrateful children,
Who merit not thy love; consult alone
Ægisthus' safety, and thy own repose.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Repose! the guilty mind can ne'er enjoy it.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Whither, my Pylades, hath cruel fate
Conducted us? alas! Orestes lives
But to increase the sorrows of his friend:
Our arms, our treasures, and our soldiers lost
In the rude storm; here on this desert coast,
No succor near, deserted and forlorn
We wander on, and naught but hope remains.
Where are we?

PYLADES.

That I know not; but since fate
Hath led us hither, let us not despair;
It is enough for me, Orestes lives:
Be confident; the barbarous Ægisthus
In vain pursued thy life, which heaven preserved
In Epidaurus, when thy arm subdued
The gallant Plisthenes: let naught alarm
Or terrify thy soul, but boldly urge
Thy way, protected by that guardian God
Who watches o'er the just, the great avenger,
Who hath already to thy valor given
The son, and promised that ere long the father
Shall follow him.

ORESTES.

Alas, my friend, that God
In anger now withdraws his powerful aid,
And frowns upon us, as thy cruel fate
Too plainly shows; a terrible example!
But say, within the rock didst thou conceal

The urn, which to Mycenæ, horrid seat
Of murder, by the gods command, we bear;
That urn which holds the ashes of my foe,
Of Plisthenes; with that we must deceive
The tyrant.

PYLADES.

I have done it.

ORESTES.

Gracious heaven!
When shall we reap the fruits of our obedience?
When will the wished-for day of vengeance come?
Shall I again behold my native soil,
The dear, the dreadful place where first I saw
The light of day? Where shall I find my sister,
The pride, the glory, of admiring Greece;
That generous maid, whom all unite to praise,
But none will dare to succor? She preserved
My life; and, worthy of her noble father,
Hath never bent beneath the oppressive hand
Of power, but braved the fury of the storm.
How many kings, how many heroes, fought
For Menelaus! Agamemnon dies,
And Greece forgets him, whilst his hapless son,
Deserted, wanders o'er a faithless world,
To seek some blest asylum for repose.
Alas, without thy friendship I had been
The most distressed, most abject of mankind:
But heaven, in pity to my woes, hath sent
My Pylades; it would not let me perish,
But gave me to subdue my hated foe,
And half avenge my father: say, my friend,
What path will lead us to the tyrant's court?

PYLADES.

Behold that palace, and the towering height

Of yon proud temple, the dark grove overgrown
With cypress, and the tomb, rich images
Of mournful splendor all: and see! this way
Advancing, comes a venerable sage,
Of mildest aspect, and whose years, no doubt,
Have long experience of calamity;
His soul will melt at thy disastrous fate.

ORESTES.

Is every mortal born to suffer? hark!
He groans, my Pylades.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

PYLADES.

Whoe'er thou art,
Stop, and inform us: we are strangers here.
Two poor unhappy friends, long time the sport
Of winds and waves, now on this unknown shore
Cast helpless, canst thou tell us if this place
Will be or fatal to us, or propitious?

PAMMENES.

I am a simple, plain old man, and here
Worship the gods, adore their justice, live
In humble fear of them, and exercise
The sacred rights of hospitality;
Ye both are welcome to my little cottage,
There to despise with me the pride of kings,
Their pomp and riches; come, my friends, for such
I ever hold the wretched,

ORESTES.

Generous stranger,
May gracious heaven inspire us with the means
To recompense thy goodness! but inform us
What place is this; who is your king?

PAMMENES.

Ægisthus:
I am his subject.

ORESTES.

Terrors, crimes, and vengeance!
O heaven, Ægisthus!

PYLADES.

Soft: do not betray us;
Be careful.

ORESTES.

Gods, Ægisthus! he who murdered——

PAMMENES.

The same.

ORESTES.

And Clytemnæstra, lives she still
After that fatal blow.

PAMMENES.

She reigns with him;
The rest is known too well.

ORESTES.

That tomb before us,
And yonder palace——

PAMMENES.

Is inhabited
Now by Ægisthus; built, I well remember,

By worthier hands, and for a better use.
The tomb thou seest, forgive me if I weep
At the remembrance, is the tomb of him
I loved, my lord, my king—of Agamemnon.

ORESTES.

O 'tis too much! I sink beneath it.

PYLADES.

Hide
Thy tears, my friend.

[*To Orestes, who turns away from him.*

PAMMENES.

You seem much moved, and fain
Would stop the tide of grief: O give it way,
Indulge thy sorrows, and lament the son
Of gods, the noble conqueror of Troy;
Whilst they insult his sacred memory here,
Strangers shall weep the fate of Agamemnon.

ORESTES.

A stranger as I am, I cannot look
With cold indifference on the noble race
Of Atreus, 'tis a Grecian's duty ever
To weep the fate of heroes, and I ought——
But doth Electra live in Argos still?

PAMMENES.

She doth, she's here.

ORESTES.

I run, I fly to meet her.

PYLADES.

Ha! whither wouldst thou go! What! brave the gods
Hazard thy precious life! forbear, my lord.

[*To Pammenes.*

O, sir, conduct us to the neighboring temple,

There will we lay our gifts before the altar
In humble duty, and adore that God
Who ruled the waves, and saved us from destruction.

ORESTES.

Wilt thou conduct us to the sacred tomb
Where lie the ashes of a murdered hero?
There must I offer to his honored shade
A secret sacrifice.

PAMMENES.

O heavenly justice,
Thou sacrifice to him! amidst his foes!
O noble youth! my master had a son,
Who, in Electra's arms—but I forbear,
Ægisthus comes: away; I'll follow you.

ORESTES.

Ægisthus! ha!

PYLADES.

We must avoid his presence.

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, PAMMENES.

ÆGISTHUS.

[*To Pammenes.*

Who are those strangers? one of them methought
Seemed, by his stately port and fair demeanor,
Of noble birth, a gloom of melancholy
Hangs on his brow: he struck me as he passed:
Is he our subject? knowest thou whence he came?

PAMMENES.

I only know they are unfortunate;
Driven by the tempest on those rocks, they came
For shelter here; as strangers I relieved them;
It was my duty: if they tell me truth,
Greece is their country.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou shalt answer for them
On peril of thy life.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Alas! my lord,
Can these poor objects raise suspicion?

ÆGISTHUS.

Yes:
The people murmur; everything alarms me.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Such for these fifteen years hath been our fate,
To fear, and to be feared; the bitter poison
To all my happiness.

ÆGISTHUS.

Away, Pammenes;
Let me know who and whence they are; why thus
They come so near the palace; from what port
Their vessel sailed, and wherefore on the seas
Where I command: away, and bring me word.

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Well, madam, to remove thy idle fears,
The interpreters of heaven it seems at length
Have been consulted; but in vain: their silence
Doubles thy grief, and heightens thy despair;
For to thyself, thy restless spirit ne'er
Will know repose; thou tremblest at the thought
Of thy son's death, yet fearest his dangerous life:
Consult no more thy doubtful oracles,
And hesitating priests, that brood in secret
O'er the dark bosom of futurity;
But hear Ægisthus, he shall give thee peace,
And satisfy thy soul: this hand determines,
This tongue pronounces Clytemnæstra's fate:
If thou wouldst live and reign, confide in me,
And me alone, and let me hear no more
Of your unworthy son; but for Electra,
She's to be feared, and we must think of her:
Perhaps her marriage with my Plisthenes
Might stop the mouth of faction, and appease
The discontented people: thou wouldst wish
To see the deadly hatred, that so long
Hath raged between us, softened into peace;
To see our interests and our hearts united:
Let it be so. Go thou, and talk with her;
But take good heed her pride refuses not
The proffered boon, that were an insult soon
She might repent of; but I hope with you,
That slavery hath bowed down her haughty spirit,

That this unhoped for, unexpected change
From poverty and chains to rank and splendor,
Joined to a mother's kind authority,
And above all, to Ambition, will persuade her
To seize the golden minutes, and be wise:
But if she spurns the happiness that courts her,
Her insolence shall meet its due reward.
Your foolish fondness, and her father's name,
Have fed her pride too long; but let her dread,
If she submits not, a severer fate,
Chains heavier far, and endless banishment.

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Come near, my daughter, and with milder looks
Behold thy mother: I have mourned in secret,
And wept with thee thy hard and cruel bondage,
Though not unmerited; for sure thy hatred
Was most unjust, Electra: as a queen,
I was offended; as a mother, grieved;
But I have gained your pardon, and your rights
Are all restored.

ELECTRA.

O madam, at your feet——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

But I would still do more.

ELECTRA.

What more?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Support
Your race, restore the honored name of Pelops,
And re-unite his long-divided children.

ELECTRA.

Ha! talkest thou of Orestes? speak, go on.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I speak of thee, and hope at last Electra
Will be Electra's friend: I know thy soul
Aspires to empire, be thyself again,
And let thy hopes transport thee to the throne
Of Argos and Mycenæ; rise from chains
And ignominious slavery to the throne
Of thy great ancestors: Ægisthus yields
To my entreaties, as a daughter yet
He would embrace thee, to his Plisthenes
Would join Electra; every hour the youth
From Epidaurus is expected here;
When he returns he weds you: look, my daughter,
Towards the bright prospect of thy future glory,
And bury all the past in deep oblivion.

ELECTRA.

Can I forget the past, or look with joy
On that which is to come? O cruel fate,
This is the worst indignity that e'er
Electra bore: remember whence I sprang,
Remember, I am Agamemnon's daughter,
And wouldst thou bind me to his murderer's son?
Give me my chains again, oppress my soul
With all the horrors of base servitude;
All that the tyrant e'er inflicted on me,
Shame and reproach suit with my sad condition;
I have supported them, and looked on death

Without a fear: a thousand times Ægisthus
Hath threatened me with death, but this is worse;
Thou art more cruel far to ask my vows,
My love, my honor; but I see your aim,
I know your purpose; poor Orestes slain,
His murderer trembles at a sister's claim,
And dreads my title to a father's throne:
The tyrant wants my hand to second him,
To seal his poor precarious rights with mine,
And make me an accomplice in his guilt:
O, if I have a right Ægisthus fears,
Let him erase my title in my blood,
And tear it from me: if another arm
Be needful to his purpose, lend him thine;
Strike here, and join Electra to her brother;
Strike here, and I shall know 'tis Clytemnæstra.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

It is too much: ungrateful as thou art,
I pitied thee; but all my hopes are past:
What have I done, what would I do, to bend
Thy stubborn heart? tears, menaces, reproaches,
And love and tenderness, the throne itself,
Which but for me thou never couldst have hoped,
Prayers, punishment, and pardon, naught availed,
And now I yield thee to thy fate: farewell!
Thou sayest that thou shalt know me for thy mother,
For Clytemnæstra, by my cruelty:
I am thy mother, and I am thy queen,
Remember that; to Agamemnon's race
Naught do I owe but hatred and revenge;
I will not warm a serpent in my breast
To sting me: henceforth storm, complain, and weep,
I shall not heed the clamors of a slave:
I loved thee once, with grief I own I loved thee;
But from this hour remember Clytemnæstra

Is not thy mother, but Ægisthus' wife;
The bonds are broken that united us,
Electra broke them; nature hath disclaimed,
And I abjure them.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA.

[*Alone.*

Gracious heaven! is this
A mother's voice? O day the bitterest sure
That ever rose since my dear father's death!
I fear I said too much, but my full heart,
Spite of myself, would pour its venom forth:
She told me my Orestes was no more;
Could I bear that? O if a cruel mother
Has robbed me of my best, my dearest treasure,
Why should I court my worst of foes, why fawn
And cringe to her, to live a vile dependant
On her precarious bounties; to lift up
These withered hands to unrelenting heaven,
To see my father's bed and throne usurped
By this base spoiler, this inhuman tyrant,
Who robbed me of a mother's heart, and now
Hath taken Orestes from me?

SCENE VII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

O Electra,
Complain no more.

ELECTRA.

Why not?

IPHISA.

Partake my joy.

ELECTRA.

Joy is a stranger to this heart, Iphisa,
And ever shall be.

IPHISA.

Still there is hope.

ELECTRA.

O no,
Still must we weep: for if I may believe
A mother, our dear brother, our Orestes,
Is dead.

IPHISA.

And if I may believe these eyes,
He lives, he's here, Electra.

ELECTRA.

Can it be?
Good heaven! O do not trifle with a heart
Like mine: Iphisa, didst thou say Orestes?

IPHISA.

I did.

ELECTRA.

Thou wouldst not with a flattering dream
Deceive me, my Iphisa—but, go on,
For hope and fear distract me.

IPHISA.

O my sister,
Two strangers, cast by some benignant God

On these unhappy coasts, are just arrived,
And hither, by the care of good Pammenes,
Conducted; one of them——

ELECTRA.

I faint: die—
Well, one of them——

IPHISA.

I saw the noble youth:
O what a lustre sparkled in his eye!
His air, his mien, his every gesture bore
The perfect semblage of a demi-god;
Even as they paint the illustrious Grecian chief,
The conqueror of Troy; such majesty
And sweet deportment ne'er did I behold;
But with Pammenes he retired, and hid
His beauteous form from my desiring eyes:
Struck with the charming image, and amazed,
I ran to seek thee here, beneath the shade
Of this dark grove, to tell the pleasing tale:
But mark what followed—on the sacred tomb,
Where we so oft have mingled our sad tears,
I saw fresh garlands, saw the votive wreath,
The water sprinkled over it, and the hair
Doubtless of those whom I so late had seen,
The illustrious strangers: near to these was laid,
What most confirmed my hopes, a glittering sword,
That spoke methought the day of vengeance near:
Who but a son, a brother, and a hero,
Raised by the gods to save his falling country,
Would dare to brave the tyrant thus? 'Tis he,
Electra, heaven hath sent him to our aid,
The lightning glares upon us, and the thunder
Will soon be heard.

ELECTRA.

I must believe Iphisa,
And hope the best; but is it not a snare
Laid by the tyrant? Come: we'll know the truth,
Let us away—I must be satisfied.

IPHISA.

We must not search him in the dark retreat
Where he is hid. Pammenes says, his life
Would answer for it.

ELECTRA.

Ha! what dost thou say?
Alas! we are deceived, betrayed, Iphisa,
By cruel heaven: thus, after fifteen years,
Restored, Orestes would have run with joy
To the dear arms that saved him, would have cheered
Electra's mournful heart, he ne'er had fled
From thee, Iphisa: O that sword thou sawest,
Which raised thy sanguine hope, alarms my fears;
A cruel mother would be well informed,
And in her eyes I read the barbarous joy
She felt within: O dart one ray of hope,
Ye vengeful gods, on my despairing soul!
Will not Pammenes yield to my entreaties?
He will; he must: away, I'll speak to him.

IPHISA.

Do not, Electra; think what cruel eyes
Watch o'er our steps, and mark our every action.
If he is come, we shall discover him
By our fond zeal, and hazard his sweet life:
If we're deceived, our search but irritates
The tyrant, and endangers good Pammenes;
But let us pay our duty at the tomb,

There we at least may weep without offence.
Who knows, Electra, but the noble stranger
May meet us in that blest asylum; there
That heaven, whose goodness thy impatient rage
Hath called in question, may yet hear my vows,
And give him to our wishes and our tears:
Let us be gone.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast revived my hopes:
But O, I die with grief, if thou deceivest me!

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

[*A slave at the farther end of the stage carrying an urn and a sword.*

PAMMENES.

Blest be the day that to our wishes thus
Restores the long-expected hope of Greece,
My royal master's son, the minister
Of heaven's high will, to execute swift vengeance
On Agamemnon's foes! The tyrant long
Hath dreaded, long foreseen the impending blow;
Conscious of guilt, in every face unknown
Still he beholds his master and his judge,
And still Orestes haunts his troubled soul:
Much he inquires concerning you, and longs
To see you both. I have a thousand fears,
A thousand hopes; heaven grant we may succeed!
Meantime I have obeyed your orders, sounded
The people's hearts, and strove to animate

Their zeal; inspired them with the distant hope
Of an avenger; soon or late the race
Of rightful kings must prosper: every heart
Glowed with warm transport at Orestes' name;
Awakened from her slumber, vengeance rises
With double vigor; my few faithful friends,
Who dwell in this lone desert with Pammenes,
Lift up their hands to heaven, and call on thee;
And yet I tremble to behold thee here
Unarmed and unassisted, lest some chance
Discover thee, and blast our hopes: the foe
Is barbarous, active, vigilant, and bold;
One fatal stroke may ruin all; whilst thou,
Against a tyrant seated on his throne,
Bringest nothing but Orestes, and his friend.

PYLADES.

And are not they sufficient? 'Tis the work
Of heaven that oft fulfils its own designs
By means most wonderful, that in the deep
O'erwhelmed our little all, and here alone
Hath left us to perform the sacrifice.
Sometimes it arms the sovereigns of the earth
With tenfold vengeance; sometimes, in contempt
Of human valor, strikes in awful silence;
Nature and friendship then assert the rights
Of heaven, and vindicate its power divine.

ORESTES.

Orestes asks no other aid, no arm
But thine, my Pylades.

PYLADES.

Take heed, my friend,
Quit not the paths of safety pointed out
By the just gods; remember thou art bound

By solemn oath to hide thee from Electra;
Thy peace, thy happiness, thy kingdom, all
Depend upon it: O refrain thy transports,
Dissemble, and obey; 'tis fit Electra
Should be deceived, even more than Clytemnæstra.

PAMMENES.

Thank heaven, that thus ordained it for thy safety.
Already hath Electra, bathed in tears,
And calling for her great avenger, filled
These solitary mansions with her cries;
Importunate and bold, she sought me out,
And with imprudent warmth, demanded loud,
Where was her brother, where her dear Orestes:
Nature had whispered to her anxious heart
He was not far from his Electra: scarce
Could I withhold her eager steps.

ORESTES.

Ye gods!
Must I refrain? O insupportable!

PYLADES.

You hesitate; O think, my dear Orestes,
Think on the menaces of angry heaven,
Think on its goodness that preserved thy life
From every danger; if thou shouldst oppose
Its sacred will, eternal wrath awaits
To blast thy purpose; tremble, son of Atreus
And Tantalus, remember what thy hapless race
Hath suffered, nor expect a milder doom.

ORESTES.

What power invincible presides unseen
O'er human actions, and directs our fate?
Is it a crime to listen to the voice
Of fond affection? O eternal justice,

Thou deep abyss, unsearchable to man!
Shall not our weakness and our guilt by thee
Be still distinguished? shall the man who wanders
From virtue's paths unknowing, and who braves
Thy power, shall he who yields to nature's laws,
And he who breaks them, share an equal fate?
But shall the slave condemn his master? heaven
Gave us our being, and can owe us nothing:
Therefore no more: in silence I obey.
Give me the urn, the ring, and bloody sword,
Which thou hast hither brought, they shall be offered
Far from Electra's sight: let us be gone;
I'll see my sister when I have avenged her.

[*Turning to Pammenes.*

Go thou, Pammenes, and prepare the hearts
Of thy brave followers for the great event
Which Greece awaits, and I must execute:
Deceive Ægisthus, and my guilty mother;
Let them enjoy the transitory bliss,
The short-lived pleasure of Orestes' death,
If an unnatural mother can behold
With joy the ashes of a murdered son:
Here will I wait, and stop them as they pass.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA *and* IPHISA *on one side of the stage* ORESTES *and* PYLADES *on the other, with a slave carrying an urn and a sword.*

ELECTRA.

[*To Iphisa.*

Hope disappointed is the worst of sorrows.
O my Iphisa, all thy flattering dreams

Are vanished, and Pammenes, with a word,
Hath undeceived us; the fair day that shone
So bright is clouded o'er, and darkness spreads
On every side: alas! our wretched life
Is but a round of never-ending woes.

ORESTES.

[*To Pylades.*

Two women, and in tears!

PYLADES.

Alas, my lord,
Beneath a tyrant all things wear the face
Of grief and misery.

ORESTES.

In Ægisthus' court
Nothing should reign but sorrow.

IPHISA.

[*To Electra.*

Look, Electra,
The strangers come this way.

ELECTRA.

Unhappy omen!
They did pronounce Ægisthus' hated name.

IPHISA.

One is that hero whom I told thee of,
The noble youth——

ELECTRA.

[*Looking at Orestes.*

Alas! I too, like thee,
Have been deceived.

[*Turning to Orestes.*

Who are ye, wretched strangers;
And what hath led you to this fatal shore?

ORESTES.

We come to see the king who reigns in Argos,
And take our orders from him.

ELECTRA.

Are ye Grecians,
And call ye him a king, the murderer
Of Agamemnon?

ORESTES.

He is sovereign here,
And heaven commands us to respect his throne,
Not to dispute his title.

ELECTRA.

Horrid maxim!
And what have you to ask of this proud king,
This bloody monster here?

ORESTES.

We come to bring him
Some happy tidings.

ELECTRA.

Dreadful then to us
They must be.

IPHISA.

[*Seeing the Urn.*

Ha! an urn! O grief, O horror!

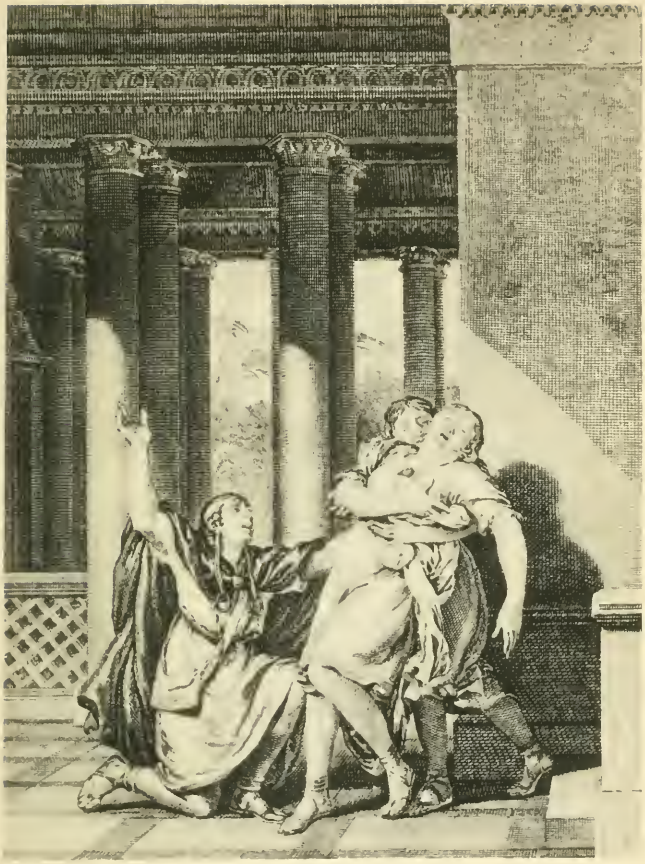
PYLADES.

Orestes——

ELECTRA.

O ye gods! Orestes dead!
I faint, I die.

"FAIR PRINCESS, BE COMFORTED AND LIVE"



ORESTES.

What have we done, my friend!
They could not be mistaken, for their grief
Betrays them: O! my blood runs cold.—Fair princess,
Be comforted, and live.

ELECTRA.

Orestes dead?
And can I live? O no, barbarians, here
Complete your cruelty.

IPHISA.

Alas! you see
The poor remains of Agamemnon; we
Are his unhappy daughters, the sad sisters
Of lost Orestes.

ORESTES.

O Electra! O
Iphisa! O where am I? cruel gods!
[*To the slave carrying the urn.*
Take from their sight those monuments of woe,
That fatal urn, which——

ELECTRA.

[*Running towards the urn.*
Wouldst thou take it from me?
Wouldst thou deprive me of the little all
That's left Electra by offended heaven?
O give it me.
[*She takes the urn, and embraces it.*

ORESTES.

Forbear; what wouldst thou do?

PYLADES.

Away: Ægisthus only must receive
These precious relics.

ELECTRA.

Must I then behold
My brother's ashes in a tyrant's hand,
And are Orestes' murderers before me?

ORESTES.

Horrid reproach! it shocks my very soul:
I can no longer——

ELECTRA.

Yet you weep with me:
O, in the name of the avenging gods,
If ye are guiltless, if your generous hands
Collected his dear ashes———

ORESTES.

Gracious heaven!

ELECTRA.

If ye lament his death, O answer me:
Who told you of his fate: art thou his friend?
Speak, noble youth: both dumb! yet both afflicted:
Even whilst your words plant daggers in my heart,
Ye seem to pity me.

ORESTES.

It is too much;
The gods have been obeyed enough already.

ELECTRA.

What sayest thou?

ORESTES.

Leave those poor remains,

ELECTRA.

O no:
I never will: alas! is every heart
Inflexible? I tell thee, cruel stranger,
I must not, cannot give thee back again
The fatal gift thy pity hath bestowed:
'Tis my Orestes; and I will embrace him:
Behold his dying sister.

ORESTES.

Cruel gods!
Where are your thunders now? O strike: Electra,
I can no longer——

ELECTRA.

Ha!

ORESTES.

I ought——

PYLADES.

O heaven!

ELECTRA.

Go on——

ORESTES.

Know then——

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAMMENES, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

O glorious spectacle!
Fortune, I thank thee: Can it be, Pammenes?

My rival dead! it is, it must be true,
Electra's grief confirms it.

ELECTRA.

Dreadful hour?

ORESTES.

To what am I reserved?

ÆGISTHUS.

Seize on the urn,
And wrest it from her.

[*They take the urn from her.*

ELECTRA.

O thou hast robbed me of the only good
This life could e'er afford me, barbarous monster!
O take Electra too, tear forth this heart
And join me to Orestes; father, son,
Sister, and brother, all thy wretched victims
Unite to satiate thy revenge: now, tyrant,
Enjoy thy happiness, enjoy thy crimes:
And thou, inhuman mother, look with him
On the delightful spectacle, it suits
Thy nature, and is worthy of you both.

[*Iphisa leads her off.*

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, *Guards.*

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Must I bear this?

ÆGISTHUS.

She shall be punished for it:
Let her complain to heaven, for heaven itself
Will justify Ægisthus; it approves
Where it forbids not; therefore I am guiltless,
And happy too: my throne stands firmly now,
My life's in safety; but I must reward
The zeal and valor of these noble Grecians.

ORESTES.

It was our duty, royal sir, to lay
These proofs before you: take this sword, this ring,
You must remember it: 'twas Agamemnon's.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

And was it then by thee Orestes fell?

ÆGISTHUS.

If thou hast served me, thine be the reward:
But, say, who art thou, of what race?

ORESTES.

My name
Must not as yet be known; perhaps hereafter
It may be: in the fields of Troy my father
Distinguished shone amongst the great avengers
Of Menelaus; in those days of glory
He fought, and fell: deserted and forlorn,
Left by a cruel mother, and pursued
By most inhuman foes, this friend alone
Supported me; was fortune, father, all;
With him I still have trod the paths of honor,
With him defied the malice of my fate:
Such is my story.

ÆGISTHUS.

But say where thy arm
Avenged me of this hated prince: inform me.

ORESTES.

'Twas a word that to the temple leads
Of Epidaurus, near Achemor's tomb.

ÆGISTHUS.

The king had set a price upon his head:
How came you not to ask for your reward?

ORESTES.

Because I hated infamy, and fought
For vengeance, not for hire; I did not mean
To sell his blood; a private motive raised
This arm against him, as my friend well knows,
And I revenged myself without the aid
Of kings, nor shall I boast the victory:
Forgive me, sir: I tremble; for the widow
Of Agamemnon's here; perhaps I've served,
Perhaps offended her; I'll take my leave.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou shalt not; stay, I charge thee.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Let him go:
That urn, and the sad story he has told,
Have filled my soul with horror: heaven, my lord,
Protects your throne and life, be thankful for it,
And leave a mother to indulge her sorrows.

ORESTES.

Madam, I thought that Agamemnon's son
Was hateful to you.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I must own I feared him.

ORESTES.

Feared him?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I did indeed; for he was born
To be most guilty.

ORESTES.

Guilty? and to whom?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

The wretched wanderer, thou knowest, was doomed
To hate a mother, doomed to shed the blood
From whence he sprang; such was his horrid fate:
Perhaps he had fulfilled—and yet, his death,
I know not why, affrights me, and I tremble
To look on you who saved me from his vengeance.

ORESTES.

Alas! a son against a mother armed!
O who could loose that sacred tie? perhaps
He wished——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

O heaven!

ÆGISTHUS.

What sayest thou? didst thou know him?

PYLADES.

[*Aside.*

He will discover all.

[*To Ægisthus.*

He did, my lord,
The wretched soon unite, and soon divide:
At Delphi first we saw him.

ORESTES.

Yes: I know
His purpose well.

ÆGISTHUS.

What was it?

ORESTES.

To murder thee.

ÆGISTHUS.

I've seen his malice long, but I despised it.
Meantime Electra used Orestes' name
To spread division o'er my kingdom; she
Was my worst foe: thou hast avenged me of her,
Take thy reward, I yield her to thy power;
She shall be thine: the haughty maid, who spurned
The great alliance with Ægisthus' son;
Henceforth she is thy slave: the wretched race
Of Priam long beneath the conqueror's yoke
Submissive bowed, and dragged the servile chain;
And wherefore should not Agememnon's blood
Bend in its turn, and share an equal fate?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Would Clytemnæstra suffer that!

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou wouldst not
Defend thy worst of foes; proscribe Orestes,
Yet spare Electra.

[*To Orestes.*

Leave the urn with me.

ORESTES.

We will, my lord, and shall accept your offer.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

That were to carry our resentment further
Than justice warrants: let him hence, and bear
Some other recompense: we too must go:

Let us, my lord, I beg thee, let us quit
These horrid mansions of the dead, where naught
But dreadful images on every side
Surrounds me: O we never can prepare
The bloody feast between the father's tomb
And the son's ashes! How shall we invoke
The household gods, whom we have injured; how,
Amidst our cruel sports, give up the blood
Of Clytemnæstra to the murderer
Of her Orestes? O it must not be!
I tremble at the thought: my fears, Ægisthus,
Should waken thine: this stranger rives my heart;
His very sight is deadliest poison to me.
Away, my lord, and let me be concealed
From every eye; would it were possible
To hide me from myself!

[*Exit Clytemnæstra.*

ÆGISTHUS.

[*To Orestes.*

Stay thou, and wait
Till time befriend thee; nature for a moment
Is clamorous and loud, but soon as reason
Shall reassume its empire, interest then
Must plead thy cause, and she alone be heard.
Meantime remain with us, and celebrate
Our nuptial day:

[*To one of his attendants.*

Haste you to Epidaurus,
And hither bring my son; let him confirm
The welcome tidings.

SCENE V.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Yes, Orestes comes
To join the cruel pomp, and make thy feast
A feast of blood.

PYLADES.

O how I trembled for thee!
I feared thy love; I feared thy tenderness;
And, more than all, thy honest rage, that burst
In transports forth when thou beheldest the tyrant:
I saw thee ready to insult him; saw
Thy soul take fire at Agamemnon's name,
And dreaded the sad consequence.

ORESTES.

My mother,
O, Pylades, my mother pierced my heart.
Didst thou not mark the workings of her soul
Whilst I was speaking? O I felt them all!
Scarce could my voice in faltering accents tell
The melancholy tale, whilst Clytemnæstra
Still gazed, and trembled still: a father's murder;
A sister unrevenged; a tyrant yet
Unpunished; and a mother to be taught
Her interest and her duty; what a weight
Of secret cares! great heaven complete thy work!
Urge on the lingering moments that retard
My vengeance; O, let me perform the task
Of love, and hatred; let me mix the blood
Of base Ægisthus with the vile remains

Of Plisthenes; let sweet Electra see
The cruel tyrant gasping at my feet,
And know her dear deliverer in Orestes!

SCENE VI.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ORESTES.

What hast thou done, Pammenes, may we hope—

PAMMENES.

O my dear lord, never, since the fatal day
When Agamemnon fell, did greater perils
Threaten thy precious life.

ORESTES.

Ha! what hath happened?

PYLADES.

Still
Must I have cause to tremble for Orestes?

PAMMENES.

This instant is arrived a messenger
From Epidaurus, and ere this related
The death of Plisthenes.

PYLADES.

Immortal gods!

ORESTES.

And knows he that Orestes slew his son?

PAMMENES.

They speak of nothing but his death; ere long
Fresh tidings are expected; and the news

Meantime concealed from Greece that she has lost
One of her tyrants; the king, still in doubt,
Shuts himself up with Clytemnæstra: this
I learned from one, who, to the royal blood
Still faithful, pines in loathsome servitude
Beneath the proud usurper.

ORESTES.

I have gathered
At least the first fair fruits of promised vengeance;
Grant me, ye gods, to reap a plenteous harvest!
Thinkest thou, my friend, they would uplift this arm
In vain, and only prosper to deceive me;
To my successful valor give the son,
And after yield me to the father's power?
Let us away: danger should make us bold;
Who fears not death is master of his foe;
I'll seize the moment of uncertainty,
Ere the full day of truth glares in upon him,
And points his rage.

PAMMENES.

Away: you must be known
To those few noble spirits who will die
To serve their prince; this secret place conceals
Some faithful friends, who may be still more useful,
Because unknown.

PYLADES.

Haste then; and if the tomb
Of thy dear father, if thy honored name
Joined to Electra's, if the wrath of heaven
Against usurpers, if the gracious gods
Who hither led thee, if they all should fail,
If this detested spot is doomed by fate
To be thy grave, O take a wretched life
To thee devoted, we will die together,

That comfort's left; for Pylades shall fall
Close by thy side, and worthy of Orestes.

ORESTES.

Strike me, kind heaven! but O for pity save
His matchless valor, and protect my friend!

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Perhaps the vigilance of good Pammenes
May for awhile remove the king's suspicions;
And gracious heaven, in pity to our woes,
Deceive Ægisthus to a fond belief,
That the devoted race of Tantalus
Is now no more; but, O my Pylades,
The sword I offered at my father's tomb
Is stolen by sacrilegious hands, that reach
Even to the sacred mansions of the dead:
If it be carried to the tyrant, all
Will be discovered; let us haste, my friend,
And seize him, ere it be too late.

PYLADES.

Pammenes
Is watchful o'er our interest; we must wait
For him: when we have gathered the few friends
That mean to serve us, be this tomb the place
Of meeting for us all, Pammenes then
Will join us here.

ORESTES.

O Pylades, O heaven!
This barbarous law that forces me to wound
A tender heart that lives but for Orestes!
And must I leave Electra to her sorrows?

PYLADES.

Yes: thou hast sworn it, therefore persevere;
Thou hast more cause to dread Electra now
Than all thy foes; she may destroy, but never
Can serve us, and the tyrant's eyes may soon
Be opened: O subdue, if possible,
The pangs of nature, and conceal thy love:
We came not here to comfort thy Electra,
But to avenge her.

ORESTES.

See, my Pylades,
She comes this way, perhaps in search of me.

PYLADES.

Her every step is watched: you must not see her:
Begone; and doubt not, I'll observe her well;
The eyes of friendship seldom are deceived.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

The villain hath escaped me; he avoids
My hated sight, and leaves me to my fate,
To fruitless rage, and unavailing tears,
Without the hope of vengeance: say, barbarian,
Thou vile accomplice in his crimes, where went

The murderer, my tyrant, my new lord,
(For so it seems Ægisthus has decreed)
Where is he gone?

PYLADES.

To do the will of heaven,
In dutiful obedience to the gods,
And well would it become the royal maid
To follow his example: fate ofttimes
Deceives the hearts of men, directs in secret,
And guides their wandering steps through paths unknown;
Ofttimes it sinks us in the deep abyss
Of misery, and then raises us to joy;
Binds us in chains, or lifts us to a throne,
And gives us life midst horrors, tombs, and death.
Complain no more, but yield to thy new sorrows;
Be patient, and be happy: fare thee well.

SCENE III.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

ELECTRA.

He swells my rage to fury and despair:
Thinks he I'll tamely bear these cruel insults?
Could not a father's and a brother's death
Fill up the measure of Electra's woes;
But she must bend beneath the vile assassin
Of her Orestes; be a common slave
To all the murderers of her hapless race?
Thou dreadful sword, wet with Orestes' blood,
Exposed in triumph at the sacred tomb,
Thou execrable trophy, for a moment
Thou didst deceive me, but thou hast insulted
The ashes of the dead; I'll make thee serve

A nobler purpose: though Ægisthus hides
His guilty head, and with the queen in secret
Plans future crimes, and meditates destruction,
Still we may find the murderer of Orestes:
I cannot bathe me in the blood of both
My tyrants, but on one at least my soul
Shall be revenged.

IPHISA.

I cannot blame the grief
Which I partake; but hear me, hear the voice
Of reason; every tongue speaks of Orestes;
They say, he lives, and the king's fears confirm it.
You saw Pammenes talking with this stranger
In secret, saw his ardent zeal to serve
And to attend him: thinkest thou, our best friend,
Our comforter, the good old man, would e'er
Associate with a murderer? never, never,
He could not be so base.

ELECTRA.

He may be false,
Or weak; old age is easily deceived:
We are betrayed by all; I know we are:
Did not the cruel stranger boast his deed?
Did not Ægisthus yield me up a victim?
Was not Electra made the price of guilt,
The murderer's reward? Orestes calls me
To join him in the tomb: now then, my sister,
If e'er thou lovest Electra, pity her
In her last moments; bloody they must be,
And terrible. Away; inform thyself
Touching Pammenes; see if the assassin
Be with the queen: she flatters all my foes;
She heard unmoved the murder of her son,
And seemed, O gods! a mother seemed, to share

The guilty transport with her savage lord.
O that this sword could reach him in her arms,
And pierce the traitor's heart! I'll do it.

IPHISA.

No more:
Indeed you wrong her; for the sight of him
Offends her: be not thus precipitate
And rash, Electra; I will to Pammenes,
And talk with him: or I am much deceived,
Or by their silence they but mean to hide
Some mystery from us: your imprudent warmth
(Yet who would not forgive it in the wretched?)
Perhaps alarms them, and they would conceal
From you their purpose; what it is, I know not:
Pammenes seems to shun you, let me go
And speak to him; but do not, my Electra,
Hazard a deed thou wilt too late repent of.

SCENE IV.

ELECTRA.

The subtle tyrants have gained o'er Pammenes;
Old age is weak and fearful: what can faith
Or friendship do against the hand of power?
Henceforth Electra to herself alone
Shall trust her vengeance: 'tis enough: these hands,
Armed with despair, shall act with double vigor.
Arise ye furies, leave your dark abode
For seats more guilty, and another hell,
Open your dreary caverns, and receive
Your victims; bring your flaming torches here,
Daughters of vengeance, arm yourselves and me;
Approach, with death and terror in your train;

Orestes, Agamemnon, and Electra
Invoke your aid: and lo! they come, I see
Their glittering swords, and unappalled behold them;
They are not half so dreadful as Ægisthus:
The murderer comes; and see, they throng around him;
Hell points him out, and yields him to my vengeance.

SCENE V.

ELECTRA.

[*At the bottom of the stage.*

ORESTES.

[*On the other side at a distance from her.*

ORESTES.

Where am I? hither they directed me:
O my dear country! and thou, fatal spot
That gave me birth, thou great but guilty race
Of Tantalus, for ever shall thy blood
Be wretched? horror here on every side
Surrounds me: wherefore am I punished thus?
What have I done? why must Orestes suffer
For his forefathers' crimes?

ELECTRA.

[*Advancing a little from the bottom of the stage.*
What power withholds me?
I cannot lift my arm against him; but
I will go on.

ORESTES.

Methought I heard a voice:
O my dear father, ever-honored shade,
Much injured Agamemnon, didst thou groan?

ELECTRA.

Just heaven! durst he pronounce that sacred name?
And see he weeps: can sighs and penitence
Find entrance here? but what is his remorse
To the dire horrors that Electra feels!

[*She comes forward.*

He is alone; now strike—die, traitor—O
I cannot——

ORESTES.

Gods! Electra, art thou here,
Furious and trembling?

ELECTRA.

Sure thou art some god
Who thus unnervest me—thou has slain my brother:
I would have taken thy life for it, but the sword
Dropped from my hand; thy genius hath prevailed;
I yield to thee, and must betray my brother.

ORESTES.

Betray him, no! O, why am I restrained?——

ELECTRA.

At sight of thee my resolution dies,
And all is changed: could it be thou who filled
My soul with terror?

ORESTES.

O, I would repay
Thy precious tears with hazard of my life!

ELECTRA.

Methought I heard thee speak of Agamemnon.
O gentle youth, deceive me not, but speak:
For I had well nigh done a desperate deed;
O show me all the guilt of it! explain
The mystery; tell me who thou art.

ORESTES.

O sister
Of dear Orestes, fly from me, avoid me.

ELECTRA.

But wherefore? speak.

ORESTES.

No more—I am—take heed
They see us not together.

ELECTRA.

Gracious heaven!
Thou fillest my heart with terror and with joy.

ORESTES.

O if thou lovest thy brother——

ELECTRA.

Love him! yes:
And O in thee I hear a father's voice,
And see his features; nature hath unveiled
The mystery: O be kind and speak for her,
Do not deny it; say thou art my brother:
Thou art, I know thou art—my dear Orestes;
How could a sister seek thy precious life?

ORESTES.

[*Embracing her.*
Heaven threatens in vain, and nature will prevail:
Electra is more powerful than the gods.

ELECTRA.

The gods have given a sister to thy vows,
And dost thou fear their wrath?

ORESTES.

Their cruel orders
Would have deprived me of my dear Electra,
And may perhaps chastise a brother's weakness.

ELECTRA.

Thy weakness there was virtue; O rejoice
With me, Orestes; wherefore wouldst thou force me
To that rash act? it might have cost thee dear.

ORESTES.

I've broken my sacred promise.

ELECTRA.

'Twas thy duty.

ORESTES.

A secret trusted to me by the gods.

ELECTRA.

I drew it from thee; I extorted it;
Mine be the guilt; an oath more sacred far
Binds me to vengeance: what hast thou to fear?

ORESTES.

My destiny, the oracles, the blood
From whence I sprung.

ELECTRA.

That blood henceforth shall flow
In purer streams; haste then, and join with me
To scourge the guilty; oracles and gods
Are all propitious to our great design,
And the same power that saved will guide Orestes.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ELECTRA.

Rejoice with me, my friends, for I have found
My dear Orestes.

PYLADES.

[*To Orestes.*

Hast thou then revealed
The dangerous secret? Couldst thou think—

ORESTES.

If heaven
Expects obedience, it must give us laws
We can obey.

ELECTRA.

Canst thou reproach him thus
Only for making poor Electra happy?
Wouldst thou adopt the cruel sentiments
Of persecuting foes, and hide Orestes
From my embraces? what unjust decree
What harsh commands—

PYLADES.

I meant to save him for thee,
That he might live, and be thy great avenger.

PAMMENES.

Princess, thou knowest, in this detested place
They watch thee nearly; every sigh is heard,
And every motion carefully observed:
Those private friends, whose humble state eludes
The tyrants search, adore this noble youth,

And would have served him; everything's prepared;
But thy imprudence now will hazard all.

ELECTRA.

Did not Ægisthus give me to a hand,
Stained, as he thought, with my Orestes' blood?
[*To Orestes.*
Thou art my master; I am bound to serve thee;
I will obey the tyrant; his commands,
For once, are welcome, and the prospect brightens
On every side.

PAMMENES.

It may be clouded soon,
Ægisthus is alarmed, and we have cause
To tremble; if he but suspects us, death
Must be our portion, therefore let us part.

PYLADES.

[*To Pammenes.*
Hence, good Pammenes, bring our friends together,
The hours are precious; haste and finish soon
Thy noble work; 'tis time we should appear,
And—like ourselves.

SCENE VII.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

Slaves, execute your office,
And bear these traitors to the dungeon.

ORESTES.

Once
There ruled o'er Argos those who better knew
The rights of hospitality.

PYLADES.

Ægisthus,
What is our crime? Inform us, and at least
Respect this noble youth.

ÆGISTHUS.

Away with them;
Ye stand aghast, as if ye feared to touch
His sacred person: hence, I say, take heed
Ye disobey me not: guards, drag them off.

ELECTRA.

O stay, barbarian, stay; for heaven itself
Pleads for their sacred lives—they tear them from
me,
O gods!

ÆGISTHUS.

Electra, tremble for thyself,
Perfidious as thou art, and dread my wrath.

SCENE VIII.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

ELECTRA.

O hear me, if thou art a mother, hear;
Let me recall thy former tenderness,
Forgive my guilty rage, the sad effect
Of unexampled sorrows; to complain,
Is still, the mournful privilege of grief:
Pity these wretched strangers; heaven perhaps,

Whose dreadful vengeance thou so long hast feared,
May for their sakes forgive thy past offences;
The pardon thou bestowest on them may plead
For thee: O save them, save them.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Why shouldst thou
Be thus solicitous? What interest prompts
Thy ardent zeal?

ELECTRA.

Thou seest, the gods protect them,
Who saved them from the Ocean's boisterous rage,
And brought them here: heaven gives them to thy care,
And will require them at thy hands—to one,
O if thou knewest him—but they both are wretched.
Are we in Argos, or at Tauris, where
The cruel priestess bids her altars smoke
With stranger's blood? What must I do to save him?
Command, and I obey: to Plisthenes
You'd have me wedded; I submit, though death
Were far more welcome; lead me to his bed.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

You mean to mock us: knowest thou not, he's dead?

ELECTRA.

Just heaven! and hath Ægisthus lost a son?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I see the joy that sparkles in thy eyes;
Thou art pleased to hear it.

ELECTRA.

No: I am too wretched
To be delighted with another's woe:
I pity the unhappy, nor would shed

The blood of innocence: O save the strangers!
I ask no more.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Away: I understand thee,
And know thee but too well; thou hast confirmed
The king's suspicions, and revealed the secret:
One of these strangers is—Orestes.

ELECTRA.

Well,
Suppose it were; suppose that gracious heaven,
In tender pity, had restored thy son——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

O dreadful moment! how am I to act?

ELECTRA.

Is it a doubt, and canst thou hesitate?
Thy son! O heaven! think on his past misfortunes,
Think on his merits; but if still thy mind
Is doubtful, all is lost: farewell Orestes.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

I'm not in doubt; I am resolved; even thou,
With all thy fury, canst not change the love,
The tenderness I bear him: I will guard,
Save, and protect him—he may punish me,
Perhaps he will; I tremble at his name;
No matter—I'm a mother still, and love
My children; thou mayst yet preserve thy hate.

ELECTRA.

No: I will fall submissive at thy feet,
And thank thy bounty: now, indulgent heaven,
Thy mercy shines superior to thy wrath;
For thou hast given a mother to my vows,
Changed her resentful heart, and saved Orestes.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

ELECTRA.

I am forbid to enter here; oppressed
With fears, in vain I lift these hands to heaven:
Iphisa comes not; but behold the gates
Are opened: ha! she's here, I tremble.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

ELECTRA.

Say,
My dear Iphisa, what have I to hope,
Will Clytemnæstra dare to be a mother?
Has she the power, has she the will to make us
Some poor amends for all the cruel evils
She has inflicted on us? Could she e'er———
But she's a slave to guilt, and to Ægisthus:
I am prepared to hear the worst; O speak,
Say, all is past, and we must die.

IPHISA.

I hope,
And yet I fear: Ægisthus hath received
Some dark suggestions, but is doubtful still,
Whether Orestes is his prisoner here,
And Clytemnæstra never named her son:
She seems to feel a mother's fondness for him,
And, pierced with anguish, trembles for his life:
She struggles with herself, and fears alike

To speak or to be silent; strives to soothe
The tyrant's rage, and save them from his vengeance:
But should Orestes once be known, he dies.

ELECTRA.

O cruel thought! perhaps when I implored
My barbarous mother I destroyed Orestes;
Her grief will but enrage the fierce Ægisthus;
Nature is ever fatal here: I dread
Her silence, and yet would not have her speak;
Danger is on every side: but say, Iphisa,
What hath Pammenes done?

IPHISA.

His feeble age
Seems strengthened by misfortune, and our dangers
But breathe new spirit o'er his ardent zeal
To serve our cause; he animates our friends
With double vigor; even the servile throng,
That cringe around the tyrant's throne, begin
To murmur at the name of great Orestes:
Veterans, who served beneath the father, burn
With honest ardor to support the son:
Such power have justice and the sacred laws
O'er mortal minds, howe'er by vice corrupted.

ELECTRA.

O that Electra could inflame their souls
With glowing virtue, breathe her own fierce spirit
Into their timid hearts, and animate
Their cold resentment! would I had but known,
Ere he arrived on this detested shore,
That my Orestes lived! or that Pammenes
Had further urged———

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA, *Guards.*

ÆGISTHUS.

Guards, seize that hoary traitor,
And let him be confronted with those strangers
Whom I have doomed to death; he is their friend,
And confidant, the accomplice in their crimes:
How dreadful was the snare which they had laid!
O, Clytemnæstra, 'tis the cursed Orestes,
It must be he; do not deceive thyself,
Do not defend him: O, I see it all,
It is too plain: alas! this urn contains
The ashes of my son: the murderers brought
This fatal present to his weeping father.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA

Canst thou believe———

ÆGISTHUS.

I can; I must rely
On the sworn hatred 'twixt the unhappy children
Of Atreus and Thyestes; must believe
The time, the place, the rage of fierce Electra,
Iphisa's tears, your undeserved compassion,
Your ill-timed pity for these base assassins;
Orestes lives, and I have lost my son;
But I have caught him in the toils; whiche'er
It be, for yet I know not, I'll be just,
I'll sacrifice the murderer to my son,
And to his mother.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Horrid sacrifice!
I must not see it.

ÆGISTHUS.

Horrible to thee?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

O yes; already blood enough hath flowed
In this sad scene of slaughter: O 'tis time
To end the woes of Pelops' hapless race:
If after all it should not be Orestes,
Wouldst thou, on dark suspicion's vague report,
Murder the innocent? and if it be
Indeed my son, my lord, I must defend him,
Must gain his pardon at thy hands, or perish.

ÆGISTHUS.

I cannot, dare not yield to thy request;
For thy own sake I dare not; thy fond pity
May be thy ruin; all that melts thy heart
To soft compassion, sharpens mine to rage
And fierce resentment: one of them I know
Must be Orestes, therefore both shall die;
I ought not even to hesitate a moment:
Guards, do your office.

IPHISA.

O, my lord, behold me
Low at your feet; must all our hapless race
Thus humbly bend, thus supplicate in vain?
Electra, kneel with me, embrace his knees,
Thy pride destroys us.

ELECTRA.

Can I stoop so low?
Shall I bring foul disgrace on thee, my brother,

And ignominy, and shame? it shocks my soul;
But I will suffer all to save Orestes.

[*Turning to Ægisthus.*

It thou wilt save him, here I promise thee,
(Not to forget my father's murder, that
I never can, but) in respectful silence
To pay thee homage, still to live with thee
A willing slave, let but my brother live.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thy brother dies, and thou shalt live a slave;
My vengeance is complete: thy pride is humbled,
And sues in vain.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Ægisthus, 'tis too much,
To trample thus on the unhappy race
Of him who was thy master once; away,
Spite of thy rage, I will defend my son;
Deaf as thou art to a fond sister's prayers,
A mother's may prevail: O think, my lord,
Think on thy happy state, above the reach
Of adverse fortune no, Orestes ne'er
Can hurt thee, and Electra bends submissive
Beneath thy power, Iphisa at thy feet;
Can nothing move thee? I have gone too far
Already with thee in the paths of guilt,
And offered up a dreadful sacrifice.
Thinkest thou I'll yield thee up my purest blood
To glut thy rage? Am I forever doomed
To take a murderous husband to my arms?
At Aulis one a lovely daughter slew,
The other threatens to destroy my son
Before my eyes, close to his father's tomb:
O rather let this fatal diadem,
Hateful to Greece, and to myself a load

Of misery, fall with me, and be no more
Remembered! O Ægisthus, well thou knowest,
I loved thee, 'tis amongst my blackest crimes,
And stands the foremost; but I love my children,
And will defend them; against thy arm upraised
To shed their blood will lift my vengeful hand,
And blast thy purpose: tremble, for thou knowest me:
The bands are sacred that united us,
Thy interest is most dear to Clytemnæstra:
Remember still, Orestes is my son,
And fear his mother.

ELECTRA.

You surpass my hopes.
Surely a heart like thine could ne'er be guilty;
Go on, my honored mother, and avenge
Your children, and your husband.

ÆGISTHUS.

Slave, thou fillest
The measure of thy crimes: gods! shall Ægisthus
Withhold his vengeance for a woman's cries,
For Agamemnon's widow, and her children?
Unhappy queen! say, whom dost thou accuse?
Whom dost thou plead for? hear me and obey.
Away with them to instant death.

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA, DYMAS.

DYMAS.

My lord?

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou seemest disordered: what has happened?
Speak.

DYMAS.

Orestes is discovered.

IPHISA.

Ha! where is he?

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

My son!

ELECTRA.

My brother?

ÆGISTHUS.

Have you punished him
As he deserves?

DYMAS.

My lord, as yet he lives.

ÆGISTHUS.

And wherefore were my orders disobeyed?

DYMAS.

His friend and fellow-captive, Pylades,
Pointed him out, and to the soldiers showed
Great Agamemnon's son; they seemed much moved;
I dread the consequence.

ÆGISTHUS.

I must prevent it,
For they shall die: who dares not to revenge me
Shall feel my justice: Dymas, follow me:
Stay thou and guard his sisters; I defy
The blood of Agamemnon: from the father
Of Plisthenes, and great Thyestes' son,
What mortal, or what god, shall save Orestes?

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

Fear not, but follow him; Electra, speak,
Exhort our friends, and animate their zeal.

ELECTRA.

[*To Clytemnæstra.*

O, in the name of powerful nature, now
Complete thy noble work; conduct us, fly——

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

You must not hence, the guards will not permit it:
Stay here, my children, and rely on me,
On a fond mother, and a tender wife:
I will perform the double task, and take
Orestes and Ægisthus to my care.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

IPHISA.

Alas! the avenging god pursues us still;
Though she defends Orestes, still Ægisthus
Is at her heart; perhaps the tender cries
Of pity and remorse shall naught avail
Against the tyrant; he is proud, revengeful,
Implacable, and furious; who shall save
If he condemns? we must submit, and die.

ELECTRA.

O that before my death I had not fallen
So low as to entreat him, to belie
My honest heart, and supplicate the tyrant!
Despair and horror sink me to the tomb
With infamy and shame; my vain endeavors
To save Orestes but urge on his fate.
Where are these boasted friends Pammenes talked of,
Who, with fell rancor, and determined hate,
Pursued Ægisthus? Where those vengeful gods
Who hid Orestes from my sight, upraised
His righteous arm, and promised to support him?
Where are ye now, infernal goddesses,
Daughters of night, ye who so lately shook
Your dreadful torches here? all nature once
United seemed to guard and to protect us,
But all desert us now, all court Ægisthus,
And men and gods, and heaven and hell betray me.

SCENE VII.

ELECTRA, PYLADES, IPHISA.

ELECTRA.

What sayest thou, Pylades? the deed is done?

PYLADES.

It is: Electra's free, and heaven obeyed.

ELECTRA.

How?

PYLADES.

Yes, Orestes reigns: he sent me hither.

IPHISA.

Just gods!

ELECTRA.

Orestes! is it possible!
I faint, I die with joy.

PYLADES.

Orestes lives,
And has avenged the blood of innocence.

ELECTRA.

What wondrous power hath wrought this strange event.

PYLADES.

His father's name, Electra's, and his own;
His valor, and his virtue; our misfortunes,
Justice, and pity; and the power that pleads
In human hearts for wretchedness like thine.
Pammenes, by the tyrant's order bound,
Was led with us to death; in weeping crowds
The people followed, and deplored our fate:
I saw their rage was equal to their fears,
But the guards watched them closely: then Orestes
Cried, "Strike, ye slaves, and sacrifice the last
Of Argos' kings; ye dare not." When he spoke,
On his fair front such native majesty
And royal lustre shone, we almost thought
Great Agamemnon's spirit from the tomb
Had risen, and came once more to bless mankind.
I spoke, and friendship's happy voice prevailed;
The people rose, the soldiers stood aghast,
And dropped the uplifted falchions from their hands;
The crowd encircled us, and desperate love,
With friendship joined, fought nobly for Orestes;

The joyful people bore him off in triumph:
Ægisthus flew to seize his destined prey,
And in the slave he meant to punish, found
A conqueror: pleased I saw his humbled pride;
His friends deserted, and his guards betrayed him:
The insulting people triumphed in his fall.
O glorious day! O all discerning justice!
Ægisthus wears the chains that bound Orestes;
The queen alone attends, protects, and saves him
From the mad crowd, that press tumultuous on,
Big with revenge, and thirsting for his blood;
While Clytemnæstra holds him in her arms,
And shields him from their rage, implores Orestes
To save her husband: he respects her still,
Fulfils the duties of a son and brother:
Safe from the foe you will behold him soon
Triumphant here, a conqueror and a king.

IPHISA.

Let us away, to greet the loved Orestes,
And comfort our afflicted mother.

ELECTRA.

Gods!
What unexpected bliss! O Pylades,
Thou best of friends, thou kind protector, haste,
Let us begone.

PYLADES.

[*To his attendants.*
Take off those shameful bonds;
[*They take off her chains.*
Fall from her hands, ye chains, for they were made
To wield a sceptre.

SCENE VIII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

ELECTRA.

O Pammenes, where,
Where is my Orestes, my deliverer?
Why comes he not?

PAMMENES.

This is a dreadful moment,
And full of terror, for his father's spirit
Demands a sacrifice, and justice waits
To pay it, so hath heaven decreed: this tomb
Must be the altar where the victim's blood
Shall soon be shed; that sacred duty done,
He will attend thee; but thou must not see
A sight so terrible: thou knowest the laws
Of Argos suffer not thy spotless hands
To join with her ere the appointed time.

IPHISA.

But say, Pammenes, what of Clytemnæstra,
How acts she in this dreadful crisis?

PAMMENES.

Vainly
She deprecates the wrath of fierce Orestes,
And strives to save Ægisthus; kneels for pardon,
And craves that boon she never will obtain:
Meantime the furies, deaf to her entreaties,
And thirsting for the cruel murderer's blood,
Throng round Orestes, and demand his life.

IPHISA.

O may this day of terror be a day
Of pardon and forgiveness; may it finish
The cruel woes of our unhappy race!
Hark, Pylades, Electra, heard ye not
A dreadful groan?

ELECTRA.

My mother's sure.

PAMMENES.

'Tis she.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Behind the scenes.*

O spare me!

IPHISA.

Heaven!

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

[*Behind the scenes.*

My son!

ELECTRA.

He kills Ægisthus.
O hear her not, Orestes, but go on,
Revenge, revenge, dissolve the horrid tie,
And sacrifice the murderer in her arms:
Strike deep.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

My son! O, thou hast slain thy mother.

PYLADES.

O cruel fate!

IPHISA.

O guilt!

ELECTRA.

O wretched brother!
Crimes punish crimes; forever be this day
Lamented by us!

SCENE IX.

ORESTES.

[*Enters.*

Open wide, thou earth,
And swallow me: O Clytemnæstra, Atreus,
And Tantalus, I come, I follow you
To Erebus, a partner in your crimes,
To share your tortures.

ELECTRA.

O what hast thou done?

ORESTES.

She strove to save him, and I smote them both——
I can no more———

ELECTRA.

She fell then by thy hand!
O dreadful stroke! and couldst thou———

ORESTES.

'Twas not I;
'Twas not Orestes; some malignant power
Guided my hand, the hateful instrument
Of heaven's eternal wrath: Orestes lives
But to be wretched; banished from my country,
When my dear father fell, my mother slain,
And by my hand; an exile from the world,
Bereft of parents, country, fortune, friends,

Now must I wander: all is lost to me:
O thou bright orb, thou ever glorious sun,
Shocked at our crimes, and Atreus's horrid feast,
Thou didst withdraw thy beams, and yet thou shinest
On me! O wherefore in eternal night
Dost thou not bury all? O tyrant gods,
Merciless powers, who punished me for guilt
Yourselves commanded, O for what new crime
Am I reserved? speak—ye pronounce the name
Of Tauris, there I'll seek the murderous priestess,
Who offers blood alone to the angry gods,
To gods less cruel, less unjust than you.

ELECTRA.

Stay, and conjure their justice and their hate.

PYLADES.

Where'er the gods may lead, thy Pylades
Shall follow still, and friendship triumph o'er
The woes of mortals, and the wrath of heaven.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

SÉMIRAMIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sémiramis.
Arsaces, or Ninias.
Azema, a Princess of the Family of Belus.
Assur, a Prince of the Family of Belus.
Oroes, High Priest.
Otanes, a Favorite of Semiramis.
Mitranes, Friend of Arsaces.
Cedar, Friend of Assur.
Guards, Magi, Slaves, Attendants.

This was produced in 1748 and a burlesque upon it was played at Fontainebleau.

SÉMIRAMIS.

ACT I.

The scene represents a large peristyle, at the bottom of which is the palace of Sémiramis. Gardens with fine hanging terraces, raised above the palace: on the right hand the temple of the magi, and on the left a mausoleum adorned with obelisks.

SCENE I.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

[*Two slaves at a distance carrying a coffer.*

ARSACES.

Once more, Mitranes, thou beholdest thy friend,
Who, in obedience to the royal mandate
In secret sent, revisits Babylon,
The seat of empire; how Sémiramis
Imprints the image of her own great soul
On every object! these stupendous piles,
These deep enclosures, where Euphrates pours
His tributary waves; the temple's pride,
The hanging gardens, and the splendid tomb
Of Ninus, wondrous monuments of art!
And only less to be admired than she
Who raised them! here, in all her splendid pomp,
More honored than the monarchs of the East,
Arsaces shall behold this glorious queen.

MITRANES.

O my Arsaces, credit not the voice
Of Fame, she is deceitful oft, and vain;

Perhaps hereafter thou mayest weep with me,
And admiration on a nearer view
May turn to pity.

ARSACES.

Wherefore?

MITRANES.

Sunk in grief,
Sémiramis hath spread o'er every heart
The sorrows which she feels; sometimes she raves,
Filling the air with her distressful cries,
As if some vengeful God pursued her; sits
Silent and sad within these lonely vaults,
Sacred to night, to sorrow, and to death,
Which mortals dare not enter; where the ashes
Of Ninus, our late honored sovereign, lie:
There will she oft fall on her knees and weep:
With slow and fearful steps she glides along,
And beats her breast besprinkled with her tears:
Oft as she treads her solitary round,
Will she repeat the names of son and husband,
And call on heaven, which in its anger seems
To thwart her in the zenith of her glory.

ARSACES.

Whence can her sorrow flow?

MITRANES.

The effect is dreadful;
The cause unknown.

ARSACES.

How long hath she been thus
Oppressed, Mitranes?

MITRANES.

From the very time
When first her orders came to bring Arsaces.

ARSACES.

Me, saidst thou?

MITRANES.

You, my lord: when Babylon
Rejoicing met to celebrate thy conquests,
And saw the banners thy victorious arm
Had wrested from our vanquished foes; when first
Euphrates brought to our delighted shore
The lovely Azema, from Belus sprung,
Whom thou hadst saved from Scythian ravishers,
Even in that hour of triumph and success,
Even in the bosom of prosperity,
The heart of majesty was pierced with grief,
And the throne lost its lustre.

ARSACES.

Azema
Was not to blame; she could not be the cause
Of sorrow or distress; one look from her
Would soothe the wrath of gods: but say, my friend,
Sémiramis is still a sovereign here,
Her heart is not forever sunk in grief?

MITRANES.

No: when her noble mind shakes off the burden,
Resumes its strength, and shines in native lustre,
Then we behold in her exalted soul
Powers that excel whatever flattery's self
Hath e'er bestowed on kings; but when she sinks
Beneath this dreadful malady, loose flow
The reins of empire, dropping from her hand;
Then the proud satrap, fiery Assur, guides

The helm and makes the nations groan beneath him:
The fatal secret never yet hath reached
The walls of Babylon: abroad we still
Are envied, but, alas! we mourn at home.

ARSACES.

What lessons of instruction to weak mortals,
When happiness is mingled thus with woe!
I, too, am wretched, thus deprived of him
Whose piercing wisdom best could give me council,
And lead me through the mazes of a court.
O I have cause to weep: without a father,
Left as I am to all the dangerous passions
Of heedless youth, without a friendly guide,
What rocks encompass and what shoals affright me!

MITRANES.

I weep with thee the loss of him we loved,
The good old man; Phradates was my friend;
Ninus esteemed and gave to him the care
Of Ninias, his dear son, our country's hope:
But O! one fatal day destroyed them both,
Father and son: to voluntary exile
Devoted, long he lived: his banishment
Was fortunate to thee, and made thee great:
Close by his side, in honor's glorious field,
Arsaces fought, and conquered for his country:
Now, ranked with princes, thy exalted virtue
Claims its reward by merit all thy own.

ARSACES.

I know not what may be my portion here:
Perhaps, distinguished on Arbazan's plains
With fair success, my name is not unknown:
On Oxus' banks to great Sémiramis,
When vanquished nations paid the homage due,

From her triumphant cars she dropped a ray
Of her own glory on Arsaces' head:
But oft the soldier, honored in the field,
In courts neglected lies, and is forgotten.
My father told me in his dying hour
The fortune of Arsaces here depended
Upon the common cause; then gave to me
These precious relics, which from every eye
He had preserved: I must deliver them
To the high priest, for he alone can judge,
And know their value: I must talk with him
In secret, touching my own fate, for he
Can best conduct me to Sémiramis.

MITRANES.

He seldom sees the queen: in solitude
Obscure he lives: his holy ministry
Engrosses all his care; without ambition,
Fearless, and void of art: is always seen
Within the temple, never at the court:
Never affects the pride of rank and title,
Nor his tiara near the diadem
Immodest wears: the less he seeks for greatness,
The more is he admired, the more revered:
I have access to every avenue
Of his retirement in this sacred place,
And can this moment talk to him in secret;
Ere day's too far advanced I'll bring him hither.

SCENE II.

ARSACES.

[*Alone.*

Immortal gods! for what am I reserved?
Make known your will: why did my dying father

Thus send me to the sanctuary, me
A soldier, bred amidst the din of arms?
A lover, too? How can Arsaces serve
The gods of the Chaldæans?—Ha! what voice
From yonder tomb in plaintive accents strikes
My frighted ear, and makes my hair to stand
On end with horror! Near this place I've heard
The spirit of Ninus dwells—again it shrieks—
It shocks my soul—Ye dark and dreary caves,
And thou, the shade of my illustrious master,
Thou voice of heaven, what wouldst thou with Arsaces?

SCENE III.

ARSACES, OROES, *the high priest, the magi attending him,* MITRANES.

MITRANES.

[*Speaking to Oroes.*

He's here, my lord, and waits to give you up
Those precious relics.

ARSACES.

Most revered father,
Permit a soldier to approach your presence,
Pleased to fulfil a father's last command,
One whom you deigned to love; thus at your feet,
Obedient to his will, I here resign them.

OROES.

Welcome! thou brave and noble youth! that God
Who governs all, and not a father's will,
Guided thee here: Phradates was my friend;

Dear is his memory to me; thou shalt know
Perhaps hereafter how I love his son:
Where are the gifts he sent me?

ARSACES.

[*The slaves deliver the coffer to two of the magi, who place it on an altar.*

Here, my lord.

OROES.

[*Opening the coffer, bowing reverentially to it, and seeming greatly affected.*

Ye sacred relics! do these eyes at length
Behold you! O, I weep for joy to press
These monuments of woe, whilst tears recall
My solemn oath: Mitranes, let no ear
Profane disturb our holy mystery:
We would be private.

[*The magi retire.*

Mark this seal, Arsaces:
'Tis that which to the laws of Ninus gave
Their public force, and kept the world in awe:
The letter, too, which with his dying hand
He wrote: Arsaces, view the wreath that crowned
His royal brows, and his victorious sword:
The vanquished Medes and Persians felt its power;
It comes at last to vindicate its master,
And to revenge him; useless instrument
Against base treachery, and destructive poison,
Whose mortal—

ARSACES.

Heaven! what sayest thou?

OROES.

The dread secret
Hath long been hid in darkness from the eyes

Of men within the sepulchre; the shade
Of Ninus, and offended heaven, long time
Have raised their voice in vain, and called for vengeance.

ARSACES.

It must be as thou sayest: for know, but now,
Even on this spot, I heard most dreadful groans.

OROES.

It was the voice of Ninus.

ARSACES.

Twice the noise
Affrighted me.

OROES.

'Twas he: he calls for vengeance.

ARSACES.

He has a right to ask it: but on whom?

OROES.

On the vile murderers, whose detested hands
Had of the best of sovereigns robbed mankind;
No tracks are left behind of the base treason,
But all with him lies buried in the tomb:
With ease might they deceive the sons of men,
But not the all-seeing eye of watchful heaven,
Which pierces the deep night of human falsehood.

ARSACES.

O would to heaven this feeble hand had power
To punish crimes like these! I know not wherefore,
But when I cast my eyes towards yon tomb,
New horrors rise: O might I not consult
That venerable shade, the inhabitant
Of those dark mansions?

OROES.

No; it is forbidden:
An oracle severe long since denounced
The wrath of heaven against whoe'er should press
Into this vale of tears, inhabited
By death and the avenging gods: await
With me, Arsaces, for the day of justice:
Soon will it come, and all shall be accomplished:
I can no more: sequestered from the world,
I pray in secret to offended heaven,
Which, as it wills, commissions me to speak,
Or close my lips in silence: I have said
All that I dare, and all I ought: be careful
Lest in these walls a word, or look, or gesture,
Betray the secret which the god by me
Hath trusted with thee; for on that depends
His glory, Asia's welfare, and thy life.
Approach, ye magi, hide these sacred relics
Beneath the altar.

[*The great gate of the palace opens, Assur appears at a distance, surrounded by attendants and guards on every side.*

Ha! the palace opens:
The courtiers crowding to the queen: behold
The haughty Assur with his servile throng
Of flatterers round him! O almighty power!
On whom dost thou bestow thy bounties here?
O monster!

ARSACES.

Ha! what meanest thou?

OROES.

Fare thee well:
When night shall cast her sable mantle o'er

These guilty walls, I'll have more converse with thee,
Before the gods: revere them, my Arsaces,
For know, brave youth, their eyes are fixed on thee.

SCENE IV.

ARSACES, MITRANES, *in the front of the stage,* ASSUR, CEDAR, *with attendants, on one side.*

ARSACES.

His words are dreadful; they affright my soul:
What horrid crimes! and what a court is here!
How little known! my royal master poisoned,
And Assur, but too well I see, suspected!

MITRANES.

Assur is sprung of royal race, and claims
The deference due to his authority:
He is the favorite of Sémiramis,
And thou, without a blush, mayest pay him homage.

ARSACES.

Homage to him!

ASSUR.

[*To Cedar.*

Ha! do my eyes deceive me,
Or is Arsaces here without my order?
Amazing insolence!

ARSACES.

What haughtiness!

ASSUR.

[*Advancing.*

Come hither, youth: what new engagements here
Have brought you from the camp?

ARSACES.

My duty, sir,
And the queen's orders.

ASSUR.

Did the queen send for you?

ARSACES.

She did.

ASSUR.

But, know you not, with her commands
You should have asked for mine?

ARSACES.

I know not that,
And should have thought the honor of her crown
Debased by such a mean submission to thee:
My lord, you must forgive a soldier's roughness,
We are bad courtiers: bred up in the plains
Of Arbazan and Scythia, I have served
Your court, but am not much acquainted with it.

ASSUR.

Age, time, and place, perhaps, may teach you, sir.
What would you with the queen? for know, young man,
Assur alone can lead you to her presence.

ARSACES.

I come to ask my valor's best reward,
The honor still to serve her.

ASSUR.

Thou wantest more,
Presumptuous boy! I know thy bold pretences
To Azema, but that thou wouldst conceal.

ARSACES.

Yes: I adore that lovely maid: her heart
Would I prefer to empire: my respect,
My tenderest love—

ASSUR.

No more: thou knowest not whom
Thou art insulting thus: what! join the race
Of a Sarmatian to the demigods
Of Tigris and Euphrates! mark me well:
In pity to thy youth I would advise thee
Ne'er, on thy peril, to Sémiramis
Impart thy insolent request; for know,
Rash boy, if thou shouldst dare to violate
The rights of Assur, 'twill not pass unpunished.

ARSACES.

I'll go this instant: thou hast given me courage:
Thus threatenings always terrify Arsaces:
Thou hast no right, whate'er thy power may be,
To affront a soldier who has served his queen,
The state, and thee: perhaps my warmth offends;
But thou art rasher than myself, to think
That I would bend beneath thy servile yoke,
Or tremble at thy power.

ASSUR.

Perhaps thou mayest;
I'll teach thee what a subject may expect
For insolence like this.

ARSACES.

We both may learn it.

SCENE V.

SÉMIRAMIS, *at the farther end of the stage, leaning on her women.*

OTANES, ASSUR, ARSACES, MITRANES, *in the front.*

OTANES.

[*Advancing.*

My lord, the queen at present would be private:
You must retire, and give her sorrows way:
Withdraw, ye gods, the hand of vengeance from her!

ARSACES.

How I lament her fate!

ASSUR.

[*To one of his attendants.*

Let us begone,
And study how we best may turn her griefs
To our advantage.

[*Sémiramis comes forward, and is joined by Otanes.*

OTANES.

My royal mistress, be yourself again,
And wake once more to joy and happiness.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O death! when wilt thou come with friendly shade
To close these eyes that hate the light of day?
Be shut, ye caves; horrible phantom, hence!
Strike if thou wilt, but threaten me no more.
Otanes, is Arsaces come?

OTANES.

Ere morn
Rose on the temple, madam, he was there.

SÉMIRAMIS.

That dreadful voice, from heaven or hell I know not,
Which in the dead of night so shakes my soul,
Told me, my sorrows, when Arsaces came,
Would soon be o'er.

OTANES.

Rely then on the gods,
And let the cheerful ray of hope dispel
This melancholy.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Is Arsaces here?
Methinks, when I but hear his name, my soul
Is less disturbed, and guilt sits lighter on me!

OTANES.

O! quit, forever quit the sad remembrance:
Let the bright days of great Sémiramis,
Replete with glory, blot one moment out
That broke the chain of thy ill-fated nuptials:
Had Ninus driven thee from his throne and bed,
All Babylon with thee had been destroyed;
But happily for us, and for mankind,
That wanted such distinguished virtues, you
Prevented him; and fifteen years of toil,
Spent in the service of thy country, lands
Desert and waste made fertile by thy care,
The savage tamed, and yielding to the laws,
The useful arts, obedient to thy voice,
Uprising still, the glorious monuments
Of wealth and power, the wonder of mankind,

And the loud plaudit of a grateful people,
All plead thy cause before the throne of heaven;
But if impartial justice hold the scale,
If vengeance is required for Ninus' death,
Why thus should Assur brave the angry gods,
And live in peace? He was more guilty far
Than thou wert, yet the ruthless hand that poured
The fatal draught never shakes with fear: he feels
No stings of conscience, no remorse affrights him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Our duties different, different is our fate:
Where ties are sacred, crimes are heavier far:
I was his wife, Otanes, and I stand
Without excuse; my conscience is my judge
And my accuser: but I hoped the gods,
Offended at my crimes, had punished me
Enough, when they deprived me of my child;
Hoped my successful toils, that made the earth
Respect my name, had soothed the wrath of heaven:
But months on months have passed in agony
Since this dire spectre hath appalled my soul:
My eyes forever see him, and my ears
Still hear his cries: I get me to the tomb,
But dare not enter: trembling I revere
His ashes, and invoke his honored shade,
Which only answers me in dismal groans.
Some dread event is nigh: perhaps the time
Is come to expiate the offence.

OTANES.

But thinkest thou
The spirit of thy lord hath left indeed
The mansions of the dead, and stalks abroad?
Ofttimes the soul, by powerful fancy led,

Starts at a phantom of its own creation;
Still it beholds the objects it has made,
And everything we fear is present to us.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O no! it was not the wild dream of fancy
By slumber wrought, I saw him but too well:
The stranger, Sleep, had long withheld from me
His sweet delusions; watchful as I stood,
And mused on my unhappy fate, a voice
Close to my bed, methought, cried out, "Arsaces!"
The name revived me: well thou knowest, long time
Assur has pierced this heart with deadly grief:
I shudder at his presence, and the blushes
That show my guilt increase my punishment,
Hate the reproachful witness of my shame,
And wish I could—but wherefore should I add
To crimes like mine fresh guilt? I sought Arsaces
To punish Assur, and the thought of him
Awhile relieved me! but in the sweet moment
Of consolation, sudden stood before me
That minister of death, all bathed in blood,
And in his hand a falchion: still I see,
Still hear him: comes he to defend, or punish?
'Twas at that very hour Arsaces came.
This day was fixed by heaven to end my sorrows,
But peace is yet a stranger to my soul,
And hope is lost in horror and despair:
The load of life is grown too heavy for me,
My throne is hateful, and my glories past
But add fresh weight to my calamities.
Long time I've hid my sorrows from the world
And blushed in secret, fearful to consult
That reverend sage whom Babylon adores:
I would not thus degrade the majesty

Of sovereign power, or let Sémiramis
Betray her fears before a mortal's eye,
But I have sent to Libya's sands in secret
There to consult the oracle of Jove:
As if removed from man, the God of truth
Had hid in desert plains his will divine.
Alas! Otanes, that dread power which dwells
Within these lonely walls, hath long received
My fears and adorations; at his altars
My gifts were offered, and my incense rose;
But gifts and incense never can atone
For crimes like mine: to-day I shall receive
Answers from Memphis.

SCENE VI.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

MITRANES.

An Egyptian priest
Is at the palace gate, and begs admittance.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Then will my woes be ended, or complete.
Let us begone, and hide from Babylon
Her queen's disgraceful sorrows: let Arsaces
Be sent to me: soon may his presence calm
This storm of grief, and soothe my troubled soul!

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

AZEMA.

To thee, Arsaces, this great empire owes
Its lustre, I my liberty and life.
When vanquished Scythia, thirsting for revenge,
From its wild desert rushed indignant forth,
And bore down all before it; when my father,
Oppressed by numbers, fell, and left me there
A hapless slave; then, armed with thunder, thou,
Piercing their dark retreats, didst break my chains,
And give me ample vengeance on my foes.
Thou wert my great deliverer, Arsaces,
And in return I give thee all my heart;
I will be thine, and only thine; but O!
Our fatal passion will destroy us both:
Thy generous heart, too open and sincere,
Believed that gallant deeds, and fair renown
In arms, would gain thee honors in a court;
And, fearless of success, thou bringest with thee
A hero's fierceness and a lover's heart.
Assur is incensed: alas! thou dost not know him:
He is too powerful for us; he rules all
At Babylon; and much, I fear, abuses
His fatal influence o'er Sémiramis:
He is thy great inexorable—rival.

ARSACES.

Ha! does he love thee?

AZEMA.

No; that savage mind,
Subtle and dark, a foe to every virtue,

Insensible to love and every charm
But those ambition boasts, could never feel
A real passion for me: but he knows
That Azema is descended from the race
Of our Assyrian kings, and soon may claim
My right of empire here, as next the throne;
And therefore means to blend his interest here
With mine, and gain the sceptre for himself:
But if the youth whom Ninus had decreed,
Even from my infant years, to be my husband,
The son of great Sémiramis, and heir
Of Babylon, were living now, and here
Would offer me his heart and half his empire,
By love I swear, and by thy precious self,
Ninias should sue in vain, and see me quit
A throne with him for banishment with thee.
Even Scythia's bleak inhospitable plains
Would yield a sweet asylum to our love;
For they would echo my Arsaces' name,
And sound his praise; those barren wilds, where first
Our passion grew, would be to me a court,
Nor should I cast a thought on Babylon.
But much I fear this subtle statesman means
To carry his resentment further still:
I've searched his soul, and know the blackness of it:
Or I mistake, or guilt sits lightly on him;
Already he is jealous of thy glory,
He fears, and hates thee.

ARSACES.

And I hate him more,
But fear him not, since Azema is mine:
Keep thou thy faith, and I despise his anger.
At least I share with him the royal favor:

I saw the queen, and her humanity
Equalled the pride of Assur: when I fell
Prostrate before her, gently she upraised me,
And called me the support of Babylon:
With pride I heard the flattering voice of her
Whose name contending kings unite to honor:
The distance 'twixt her royal state and mine
Was lessened soon by mildest condescension;
It touched, it melted me; and, after thee,
To me she seemed, of all the human race,
Most nearly to resemble the divine.

AZEMA.

If she protects us, Assur's threats are vain:
I heed them not.

ARSACES.

Inspired by thee, I went,
Fearless and brave, to lay before the feet
Of my great mistress, that aspiring passion
Which Assur dreads, and Azema approves;
When lo, that very moment came a priest
From Egypt with Ammonian Jove's decree:
Trembling she opened quick the awful scroll,
First fixed her eyes on me, then sudden turned
Her face aside, and wept: stood fixed in grief
Like one distraught, then sighed, and vanished from me.
They tell me, she is fallen into despair,
And hath of late been dreadfully pursued
By some avenging god: I pity her:
'Tis wonderful that after fifteen years,
Heaven, that so long defended, should at last
Oppress her thus: by what hath she offended
The angry gods, and wherefore are they changed?

AZEMA.

We hear of naught but dreadful spectres, omens,
And vengeance from above: the queen of late
Lets loose the reins of empire: we had cause
To fear for Babylon, least subtle Assur,
Who knows her weakness, in this dangerous time,
Should seize the helm, and bury all in ruin:
But the queen came, and all was calm again;
All owned the power of her despotic sway.
If I have any knowledge of the court,
The queen hates Assur, but keeps fair with him,
And watches close; they're fearful of each other,
Would quarrel soon, but that some secret cause,
Some mutual interest, still prevents a rupture:
I saw her fire indignant at his name;
The blushes on her cheeks betrayed her thoughts,
And her heart seemed to glow with deep resentment:
But sudden changes happen in a court;
Return, and speak to her.

ARSACES.

I will; but know not
Whether again I e'er shall gain admittance.

AZEMA.

Thou hast my vows, my wishes, and my prayers
For thy success: I glory in my love,
And in my duty: let Sémiramis
Rule o'er the vanquished East, I envy her
Nor fame nor conquest; let the world be hers,
Arsaces mine: but Assur comes this way.

ARSACES.

The traitor! how I shudder at his presence!
My soul abhors him.

SCENE II.

ASSUR, ARSACES, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

Your reception, sir,
I find, was noble, such as kings have oft
Solicited in vain: you saw the queen
In secret, did she not reprove a conduct
Injurious to my honor and her own?
Did she not tell thee Azema's designed
For Assur, not for thee? Long since her hand
To Ninias given was for the blood of kings
Alone reserved; and therefore is my right,
As next to the throne: did she acquaint you, sir,
Into what fatal snares your pride would lead you,
That neither fame nor honors will excuse
Your bold pretensions?

ARSACES.

I well know what's due
To your high birth, and to the rank you bear,
And should have paid it, though you had not thus
Instructed me; but as a master here
I own you not: your royal ancestors,
From Belus sprung, perhaps may give you claim
To Azema; the welfare of the state,
Present and future, all, I own, conspire
To raise your hopes of bliss, and make her yours:
These are your claims, and I acknowledge them:
But I have one that's worth them all: I love her:
I might have added this, that I avenged
And saved her, gave new lustre to the throne

Which she was born to fill, if I had chosen,
Like thee, to boast of my exploits before her.
But I must leave thee, to perform her orders.
Sémiramis and her I shall obey,
And them alone: a day perhaps may come
When thou shalt be our master: heaven sometimes
In anger sends us kings: but thou art deceived,
At least in one of thy ambitious views,
If amongst thy subjects thou hast ranked Arsaces.

ASSUR.

The measure's full: thou courtest thy own destruction.

SCENE III.

ASSUR, AZEMA.

ASSUR.

I've borne his insolence too long already,
'Tis time we enter on a nobler subject,
And worthier thy attention.

AZEMA.

Can there be one?
But speak.

ASSUR.

Ere long all Asia shall attend
On our resolves, and low concerns like these
Must pass unheeded by: a world demands
Our mutual care: Sémiramis is now
The shadow of herself, her glory's past,
That star which shone with such transcendent lustre,
Declining now, sends forth a feeble ray;

The people see and wonder at her fall,
Whilst every tongue demands a——successor:
That word sufficeth: you well know my right:
'Tis not for love to deal forth sovereign power,
And point out who shall rule in Babylon;
Not that my soul, to beauty blind, would make
A virtue of insensibility;
But I should blush for thee and for myself,
To see the welfare of a nation thus
Dependent on a sigh: thoughts worthier both
Must guide my fortune, and determine thine:
Our ancestors the same, we should offend
Their venerable shades, and lose the world
By not uniting: I astonish you:
These are harsh words for tender age like thine;
But I address me to the kings and heroes
From whom you sprung, to all those demigods
Whom here you represent: too long trod down
Beneath a woman's feet their ashes lay,
Their glories she eclipsed, usurped their power,
And fettered vanquished nations with her laws;
But she is gone, and thou must now support
The building she had raised: she had thy beauty,
And thou must have her courage: let not love
Or folly wrest the sceptre from thy hand,
But grasp it close: you will not sacrifice
To a Sarmatian's idle passion for you
The name you ought to honor, and the throne
You should ascend, of universal empire.

AZEMA.

Let not Arsaces be the theme, my lord,
Of your reproaches, but depend on me
To vindicate the honor of my race,
And to defend, whene'er occasion calls,

The rights of my loved ancestors; I know
Their worth and virtues, but I know not one
Amongst the heroes which Assyria boasts
More great, more virtuous, more beloved, than he,
Than this Sarmatian, whom you thus disdain.
Do justice to his merit: for myself,
When I shall bend to Hymen's laws, the queen
Must guide my choice, and at her hands alone
Will I receive a master: for the crowd,
The babbling echo of one secret voice,
I heed it not; nor know I if the people
Are tired of their obedience to a woman,
But still I see them bow the knee before her;
And if they murmur, murmur in the dust:
The hand of heaven, they say, is raised against her:
I am a stranger to her guilt, but think
That heaven would never have made choice of thee
To tell its high commands, or minister
Its justice to mankind: Sémiramis
Is still a queen, and you who lord it here
Receive from her the laws which you dispense:
For me, I own her power, and hers alone:
My glory is to obey, be thine the same.

SCENE IV.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

ASSUR.

Obey! I blush to think how long already
I have obeyed: O insupportable!
But say, hast thou succeeded, are the seeds
Of hatred sown in secret through the realm?

Will they spring up into a fruitful harvest
Of discord, and rebellion?

CEDAR.

All is well:
The people, long deluded by the arts
And dazzling glory of Sémiramis,
At length have lost their idle veneration:
No longer chained to silence, they demand
A successor: each lover of his country
Calls for a master, and looks up to thee.

ASSUR.

Heart-burning care! and ever-during shame!
Still must my hopes, my fate depend on her?
Was it for this that Ninus and his son
Fell by my hand, that Assur might be still
Only her first of slaves? So near the throne,
To languish in illustrious servitude,
And only be the second of mankind!
The queen was satisfied with Ninus' death,
But I went further, and pursued my blow:
Ninias, in secret murdered by my order,
Opened my passage to the throne; but she
Denied me entrance.—A long time in vain
I soothed her pride with flattery on her charms;
Still hoped one day to gain upon her youth
That happy influence which assiduous care
And humble adoration seldom fail
To win o'er artless minds that bend with ease:
I little knew the firmness of her soul,
Inflexible, and bold; the world alone
Could satisfy her pride: she seemed indeed
Most worthy of it: spite of my resentment,
I own she was, and yield the praise she merits.
The reins of empire, that flowed loose before,

Strongly she held; appeased the murmuring crowd,
Silenced their plaints, and quashed conspiring rebels;
Fought like a hero, like a monarch ruled:
She led her army and her people captive,
And spite of fame, with more than magic art,
Chained down the minds of men: the universe
Astonished stood, and trembled at her feet.
In short, her beauty, woman's best support,
Strengthened the laws which power and valor made;
And when I strove to raise conspiracies
My friends stood mute, and only could admire her.
At length the charm is broke: her power decays;
Her genius droops; remorse, and idle fears,
And fond credulity have bound her faith
To lying oracles, which knavish priests
Had taught to speak in Egypt's barren plain:
She pours her daily incense at their altars,
And wearies heaven with vows: Sémiramis
Creeps on a level now with common mortals,
And condescends to fear: I know her weakness:
Know, till she falls, Assur can never rise:
But I have raised the people's voice against her,
And she must yield: this blow decides her fate:
If she consents to give me Azema,
She is no longer queen; if she refuses,
The kingdom will revolt: on every side
The snare is laid, and nothing now can save her.
Yet, after all, perhaps I am deceived,
And fortune, so long called for, comes at last
But to betray me.

CEDAR.

If the queen is forced
To name a successor, and yields the princess
To Assur's bed, what can he have to fear,

When the divided branch of Asia's kings
Shall be united? all conspires to pave
Your way to empire.

ASSUR.

Azema is safe;
She must be mine; but wherefore send so far
For this Arsaces? she supports him too;
And when I would chastise his insolence,
Her interposing hand prevents me still:
A minister without the power, a prince
Without a subject, girt around with honors,
And yet a poor dependent, what is Assur?
All, all unite to persecute me now:
A peevish mistress, and a haughty rival,
Consulted priests that teach their gods to speak
Against me; with Sémiramis, who strives
To free herself, yet trembles at my presence:
But we shall see how far this proud ingrate
Will urge an angry rebel who defies her.

SCENE V.

ASSUR, OTANES, CEDAR.

OTANES.

My lord, the queen commands you to attend her
In secret, and alone.

ASSUR.

I shall obey
Her sacred orders, and with care perform
My sovereign's will.

SCENE VI.

ASSUR, CEDAR.

ASSUR.

Whence springs this sudden change?
These three months past she has avoided me,
Even as the object of her hatred: oft
When she beheld me she would cast her eyes
Down on the earth, as if she loathed the sight:
Whene'er we met, 'twas in a gaping crowd
Of hearers; when she spoke, her sighs and tears
Would interrupt our converse, or perchance
Silence was all the answer she would give me.
What can she want? What can she say to me?
But here she comes: 'tis she—wait you within.
[*To Cedar.*

SCENE VII.

SÉMIRAMIS, ASSUR.

SÉMIRAMIS.

My lord, I come to ease a troubled heart
Of its long hidden woes, and pour it all
Before you: I have ruled o'er Asia long,
And not ingloriously: Babylon perhaps
May pay this tribute to my memory,
And say Sémiramis deserved to rank
Among the greatest of her kings: thy hands
Have helped me to support the weight of empire;
With absolute dominion have I ruled,
Adored by all, and crowned with victory

On every side: intoxicated long
With flattery's pleasing incense, I forgot
The crimes that raised me to this envied state;
Forgot the justice of high heaven: it comes;
It speaks to me: Sémiramis must yield:
This noble structure, which I fondly thought
Superior to the injuries of time,
Is tottering now, and shakes from its foundation;
Means must be found to strengthen and support it.

ASSUR.

The work is yours, and you must finish it:
Foresee the attacks of time, and stop his rapine:
Who shall obscure the lustre of thy days,
Or wherefore fearest thou heaven whilst earth obeys thee?

SÉMIRAMIS.

Yonder the ashes of my husband lie;
Canst thou look there, and wonder at my fears?

ASSUR.

I cannot bear to hear the noisy crowd
Still talk of Ninus: wherefore should remembrance
Call back the thoughts of that inglorious reign?
Can they believe, that, after fifteen years,
His angry spirit still calls out for justice?
Ere now he would have taken due vengeance on us,
Had he the power: why from the peaceful realms
Of dark oblivion wouldst thou call the dead,
Or search for truth in lying oracles?
I am astonished too, but 'tis at thee,
And thy vain fears: to make the gods propitious,
We must be resolute: this idle phantom,
At once the child and parent of your fears,
Why should it thus alarm you? Prodigies

Never appear to those who dread them not:
Baits to allure the unthinking multitude,
By knaves invented, and by fools believed;
The great despise them: but if nobler views
Inspire thy soul to immortalize the blood
Of Belus, if the beauteous Azema
Claims her high rank.——

SÉMIRAMIS.

Assur, on that I came
To speak with thee: our Babylon demands,
For such is Ammon's will, a successor:
Heaven and my people will be satisfied
When I shall take a partner to my throne:
Thou knowest, my pride could never condescend
To a divided sway; 'twas my resolve
To rule alone, while the impatient world
Urged me in vain; and when the people's voice,
Which now is echoed by the voice of heaven,
Still presses me, in the bloom of youth, to give
A sovereign to mankind, I still refused:
If I had yielded then to any claim,
It had been thine; you had a right to hope,
And to expect it; but you knew too well,
How much Sémiramis abhorred a master.
Without submitting to a tie so fatal,
I made thee then the second of mankind,
And only not my equal; 'twas enough,
I thought, to satisfy even thy ambition.
At length the gods make known their will divine,
And I obey them: hear the oracle:
"All shall again be well at Babylon,
When Hymen's torch a second time shall blaze
Propitious; then shalt thou, O cruel wife,
And wretched mother, then shall thou appease

The shade of Ninus." Thus the voice of heaven
Declares its sacred will: I know thy arts;
Know, thou hast formed a party in the state,
And mean to oppose me with the royal blood
From whence you sprung: from thee and Azema
My successor, it seems, must rise; I know
You look that way, and she perhaps aspires
To equal honors; but, observe me well:
I shall not suffer your united claims
To rob me of my right: remember, sir,
You know my will; 'tis constant, and as fate
Irrevocable: thinkest thou now the God
Whose arm is lifted o'er me hath deprived
My soul of all its wonted strength and spirit,
Or dost thou still behold Sémiramis,
Who can support the honor of her throne?
Know, Babylon ere long shall at my hands
Receive a master: whether the high choice
Shall fall on thee, or be another's lot,
I'll take a sovereign as a sovereign ought:
Bring me the magi and the princess here
To join their voices with Sémiramis.
To give away my freedom and my empire
Is the first, greatest act of royal power,
And therefore let it be performed with awe
And silence due to my authority.
Heaven hath appointed this great day to show
Its mercy to me, and the gods at length
Remit their anger; nothing can disarm it
But my repentance; 'tis the only virtue:
Trust me, it is, howe'er you may despise it,
Remaining for the guilty: weak, I know,
And fearful thou esteemest me; but henceforth
Remember, Assur, guilt alone is weakness:
Think not that fear can e'er disgrace a throne,

It has done good to kings, and might to thee;
I tell thee, statesman, to obey the gods,
And tremble at their power, is no abasement.

SCENE VIII.

ASSUR.

[*Alone.*

Astonishment! such language, such designs!
Or is it artifice, or weakness in her,
Or cowardice or courage? Does she mean,
By yielding thus, to prop her tottering power,
And by our union to defeat my purpose?
I must not think, it seems, of Azema,
Because, perhaps, I'm destined for herself.
It must be so. What all my cares in vain
Solicited, my flattery of her charms,
My deep intrigues, and our united crimes,
With all her fears, could never gain, at length
An idle dream, and a dark oracle
From Egypt have performed. What power unknown
Decrees the fate of mortals? Great events
Hang on the slenderest thread: still I am doubtful:
I'll see Sémiramis again; she seemed
Too much in haste; such sudden resolutions
Betray an overanxious mind, and those
Who change with ease are either weak, or wicked.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

[*The scene represents an apartment in the palace.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

Who would have thought, Otanes, that the gods,
Offended as they were, at length should smile
Propitious thus, and threaten but to save!
Should drop the uplifted thunder from their hand,
And pardon me; should send Arsaces hither
To change my fate! for know it is their will
That I should wed, and by a second tie
Expiate the crimes of my first fatal nuptials.
They are the great disposers of our hearts,
And mine with pleasure yields to their decrees:
It even outruns their purposes: Arsaces,
I'm thine; for thou wert born to rule o'er me,
And o'er the world.

OTANES.

Arsaces! he!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou knowest,
In Scythia's plains, when I avenged the Persian,
And conquered Asia, this young hero fought
Beneath his father's banners, and, surrounded
With captives, brought to me the bloody spoils,
And, blushing, laid his victims at my feet.
When first I saw him, I could feel his heart,
As by some secret power, attracting mine
Insensibly towards him; all mankind,
Besides Arsaces, seemed not worth my notice.

Assur grew jealous of him, and ever since
Has fired with indignation at his name;
Whilst his dear image still employed my thoughts,
Before that voice which guides my every word
And every action named him for my husband,
Before the gods had pointed out Arsaces.

OTANES.

It was indeed a noble conquest, thus
To bend that haughty spirit which disdained
The proffered homage of our Eastern monarchs,
Who as her subjects, not as lovers, still
Accepted kings! You who contemned those charms,
That sovereign beauty, which extended wide
Your universal empire; whilst your eyes
Pierced every heart, you scarce would condescend
To mark their power; and dost thou yield at last
To love's imperious sway; to fears and horror
Succeed the tender passions? Can it be?

SÉMIRAMIS.

O, no; it is not love: I am not fallen
So much beneath myself, as to bestow
On beauty the reward that's due to virtue;
I feel a nobler passion in my breast:
Alas! such weakness would but ill become
Sémiramis: unhappy as I am,
For me to think of love, Otanes, how
Couldst thou suppose it? Once I was a mother,
But scarce had studied to deserve the name
By my fond cares, when heaven in anger snatched
My child away, and left me here alone
A prey to anguish. I had nothing near me
That I could love; and, midst my grandeur, felt
An aching void within my soul. I fled
The court, endeavored to avoid myself,

And sought relief in these proud monuments,
Amusing flatterers of a restless heart
That shunned reflection: rest was still a stranger,
And long remained so; but he comes once more,
I feel him now, and wonder at the power
That charmed him hither: 'twas Arsaces; he
Shall hold the place of husband and of son,
A conquered world, and all my glories past.
How much I owe to thee, celestial power,
Who thus propitious leadest me to the altar
So long abhorred; and hast thyself inspired
That passion which alone can make me happy!

OTANES.

But what will be the rage and grief of Assur?
Hast thou reflected on it, when he hears
Thy new resolves? He is not without hopes:
The people have already fixed thy choice
On him, and his resentment will not end
In mere complaints.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I never have deceived,
And therefore fear him not: these fifteen years,
Whate'er his views have been, I've taught him still
To rank but with my subjects, though the first
Amongst them; and set bounds to his ambition,
Which he hath never o'erleaped: I reigned alone;
And if this feeble hand so long could guide
The helm of power, and curb his haughtiness,
What can his courage or his cunning do
Against Arsaces and Sémiramis?
Yes: Ninus hath accepted my repentance,
And leaves the mansions of the dead to urge
Our happy union: his illustrious shade
Again would rage to see his murderer seize

His throne and bed: this calls him from the tomb,
And Ammon's oracles unite with him
To crown my bliss: no more the awful virtue
Of Oroes affrights me; I've sent for him
To be a witness of the great event,
And soon expect him here.

OTANES.

His honored name
And sacred character may give indeed
A sanction to your choice.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I know it will,
And establish my resolves.

OTANES.

Behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

SÉMIRAMIS, OROES,

SÉMIRAMIS.

Great successor of Zoroaster, welcome:
To-day must Babylon receive a king;
Thy office is to crown him; is all ready
For the solemnity?

OROES.

The magi wait
Thy pleasure, and the nobles all attend:
To pay obedience to the sovereign power
Is all my duty, and I shall fulfil it:
I am not to judge kings, for that belongs
To heaven alone.

SÉMIRAMIS.

By this mysterious language,
It seems you disapprove my purpose.

OROES.

Madam,
I know it not, but wish it fair success.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou canst interpret heaven's high will: these signs
Which I have seen, can they be fatal to me?
A spectre hath of late, perhaps some god,
Appeared, and in the bosom of the earth
Re-entered soon: what power hath thus broke down
The eternal barrier that divides the light
From darkness? wherefore should a mortal thus
Rise from the tomb to visit me?

OROES.

Know, heaven
Doth oft suspend its own eternal laws
When justice bids, reversing death's decree;
Thus to chastise the sovereigns of the earth,
And terrify mankind.

SÉMIRAMIS.

The oracles
Demand a sacrifice.

OROES.

It shall be offered.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Eternal justice, thou whose piercing eye
Beholdest my naked heart, O fill it not
Again with horror, bury in oblivion

My first unhappy nuptials!
Oroes, stay.
[*To Oroes, who is retiring.*

OROES.

[*Returning.*
I thought my presence might disturb you, madam.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Return, and answer me: this morning, say,
Did not Arsaces offer at your altars
Gifts to the gods?

OROES.

He did; and precious were they:
Arsaces is the favorite of heaven.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I know he is, and I rejoice to hear it.
Can I be wretched if I trust to him?

OROES.

He is the empire's best support; the gods
Conducted him; his glory is their care.

SÉMIRAMIS.

With transport I accept the fair presage,
Whilst hope and peace return to calm my breast.
Away: again let purest incense rise
Before your altars; let your magi come
And sanctify the choice; bring down the smiles
Of the assenting gods, and make us happy.
Henceforth may Babylon with me revive,
And shine amongst the nations of the earth
With double splendor! Go thou, and prepare
The solemn pomp.

SCENE III.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Heaven seconds my design,
And I am only the interpreter
Of its high will, to give the world a master:
Thus to receive a kingdom at my hand
Will strike him with astonishment: even now
How little thinks he of the approaching greatness!
How will proud Assur and his fawning crowd
Be humbled! But a word, and the whole earth
Falls at his feet; and, grateful as he is,
I know he will repay me: I shall wed him,
And for my portion carry him a world;
My glory's pure, and now I shall enjoy it.

SCENE IV.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES, MITRANES.

AN OFFICER OF THE PALACE.

OTANES.

Arsaces begs admittance to your presence,
To lay his sorrows at your feet.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Arsaces!
What sorrows can Arsaces feel when I
Am near him, he who thus hath banished mine?
Quick, let him come: he knows not yet his power

O'er the fond heart of his Sémiramis:
O thou dread shade whose voice alarmed my soul,
Whose blood no more calls out for vengeance on me,
And you, the guardian gods of this great empire,
Of the Assyrians, Ninus, and my son,
Unite to bless Arsaces! Ha! the sight
Alarms me; whence can these strange terrors rise?

SCENE V.

SÉMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

ARSACES.

O queen, I am devoted to thy service;
My life is thine; and when I shed this blood,
I am rewarded if it flows for thee.
My father had some small renown in arms;
I saw him perish bravely in the field,
And at the head of thy victorious bands;
He left his hapless son a fair example,
Perhaps but ill pursued: I'll not recall
The memory of my father's services,
'Twould ill become me; at your royal knees,
Though here I sue for favor and protection:
Pity the rashness of a guilty youth,
Who listened to the dictates of imprudence,
And even in serving feared he might offend you.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Offend me! thou, Arsaces! fear it not.

ARSACES.

To-day you give your kingdom and your hand:
My heart, I know, should on the great event
Keep secret all its fears, and humbly still

In silence, with depending monarchs, wait
To know our master; but this Assur steps
So haughtily, and triumphs in his conquest,
We cannot brook his pride: the people call him
Already their new sovereign; his high blood
And rank support him: may he prove himself
Worthy of both! but I have still a soul
Too proud to bend beneath him, or adore
The power I had defied: his jealous heart
I know detests Arsaces: let me then
Retire in safety, far from him, and thee:
Permit me to revisit the dear climes
Where first I served my royal mistress, there
His tyranny can never reach: perhaps
I may hereafter—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Wilt thou leave me then,
And fearest thou Assur?

ARSACES.

No: Arsaces fears
Naught but the anger of Sémiramis.
Perhaps thou knowest my fond ambition, then
I've cause indeed to tremble.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Hope the best,
And know that Assur ne'er shall be thy master.

ARSACES.

I own it shocked my soul to look on him
As Ninus' successor: but is he then
Designed for Azema? forgive this bold
Presumptuous questioner: long since I know
She was to Ninias given, proud Assur sprung

From the same race, and claims her as his own:
I am but a poor subject, yet I dare——

SÉMIRAMIS.

Such subjects are my kingdom's best support;
I know thee well; thy noble soul, superior
To vulgar minds, hath sought Sémiramis,
Not for her fortunes, but herself; thy eyes
Are fixed on her true interest, and on thee
I shall depend: Assur and Azema
Shall never meet; their union would be dangerous:
But their designs are known, and by my care
Will be prevented.

ARSACES.

Since my heart at length
Is open to thee, and thou hast discovered——

AZEMA.

[*Enters suddenly, and throws herself at the feet of Sémiramis.*

O queen, permit me thus———

SÉMIRAMIS.

Rise, Azema:
Where'er my choice may light, thou mayest depend
On my protection, and shalt find respect
Due to thy birth; for, destined as thou wert
To be the wife of my lamented son,
I look upon thee with a mother's eye:

[*To them both.*

Go, place yourselves with those whom I have called
To witness my resolves, and mark my choice.

[*To Arsaces.*

Be thou, my best protector, near the throne.

SCENE VI.

The apartment of Sémiramis opens into a magnificent saloon richly ornamented; a number of officers in their proper habits on the steps of the throne, which is raised in the middle; the satraps on each side: the high priest enters with the magi, and places himself between Assur and Arsaces: the queen in the midst with Azema, and her attendants: guards at the lower end of the saloon.

OROES.

Ye princes, magi, warriors, the support
Of Babylon, assembled by command
From great Sémiramis, the will of heaven
Soon shall ye know: the gods that guard our empire
Have fixed on this important hour to work
A great and mighty change; whoe'er the queen
Shall here appoint her sovereign and our own
It is our duty to obey; and here
I bring my tribute to the throne, my prayers
And wishes for the glory and the welfare
Of them, and of their kingdom: may these days
Of joy and gladness ne'er be changed to hours
Of grief and sorrow, nor these songs of mirth
To mournful plaints!

AZEMA.

A king, my lords, will soon
Be named; whoe'er he be, the choice will injure
Myself alone; but Azema was born
And must remain a subject; I submit
To the queen's pleasure, and on her protection
Shall still depend; nor with the dark presage
Of future ills shall interrupt your joy:
But leave you my example of obedience.

ASSUR.

Howe'er the queen may choose, and heaven determine,
We must consult the public good alone;
Let us then swear by this imperial throne,
And great Sémiramis, to yield submissive,
And without murmuring to obey her will.

ARSACES.

I swear it; and this arm that fought for her,
This heart obedient ever to her voice,
Which next the voice of heaven I still revered,
This blood which flowed with pleasure for her sake,
Shall be devoted to that royal master
Whom she appoints.

HIGH PRIEST.

I wait the great award
Of heaven and Sémiramis.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Enough:
Each to his place, and now attend, my people.
[*She seats herself on the throne.*

[AZEMA, ASSUR, OROES (*the high priest*) *and* ARSACES *take their places, and she proceeds.*

If in that hand which custom and the laws
Of an imperious husband had confined
To homely cares, and to a distaff chained,
I bore aloft the sceptre and the sword,
Beyond my subjects' hope, nor sunk beneath
The weight of empire, let me now extend
To latest times its glory: 'tis my purpose
This day to take a partner in the throne:

The gods must be obeyed, whose dread command
At length subdued my long unconquered heart:
They who deprived me of my son, perhaps
May one day raise an heir to Babylon
Worthy of empire, who shall follow me
Through all the thorny paths that I have trod,
Finish my work, and make my reign immortal.
I might have chosen a sovereign from the kings
That dwell around me, but they are all my foes,
Or tributary slaves: a foreign hand
Shall never wield this sceptre: my own subjects
Are better than the kings which they have conquered:
Belus was born a subject; if he gained
The diadem, he owed it to the people,
And to himself: by rights like his I hold
The power supreme; and, mistress of a kingdom
Larger than his, have bent beneath my yoke
The nations of the East, which Belus ne'er
Had seen or heard of: what he but attempted
Sémiramis performed; for they who found
A kingdom, and they only, can preserve it.
You want a king who may be worthy of you,
Worthy of such an empire, shall I add
Worthy the hand that crowns him, and the heart
Which I shall give: I have consulted heaven,
My country's weal, the interest of mankind,
And choose a king to make the world more happy.
Adore the hero, see in him revived
The princes of my honored race; observe him,
And know, this king, this hero, is—Arsaces.

[*She descends from the throne, and they all rise.*

AZEMA.

Arsaces! the perfidious——

ASSUR.

Rage and vengeance!

ARSACES.

Believe me, Azema———

OROES.

Just heaven! avert
These omens.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou who sanctifiest my choice,
Confirm it at the altar: see in him
Ninus and Ninias both restored.

[*It thunders, and the tomb shakes.*

O heaven!
What do I hear?

OROES.

Great gods, protect us now!

SÉMIRAMIS.

The thunder comes, in anger or in love
I know not: pardon, gracious gods! Arsaces
Must win them to forgiveness. Ha! what voice
Distracts me thus? and see, the tomb is open.
O heaven! I die.

[*The ghost of Ninus comes out of the tomb.*

ASSUR.

The shade of Ninus' self.
Gods! is it possible?

ARSACES.

What sayest thou? speak,
Thou god of terrors.

ASSUR.

O unfold thy tale.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Comest thou to pardon, or to punish me?
It is thy sceptre and thy bed which here
I have bestowed: speak, is he worthy of it?
Determine: I obey thee.

THE GHOST OF NINUS TO ARSACES.

Thou shalt reign,
Arsaces, but there are some dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate: hie thee to the tomb,
And to my ashes offer sacrifice:
Serve me and Ninias: remember well
Thy father: listen to the pontiff.

ARSACES.

O!
Thou venerable shade, thou demigod,
Who dwellest within these walls, the sight of thee
Inspires but does not amaze Arsaces:
Yes, I will go, on peril of my life,
And meet thee in the tomb: but tell me, what
Must be the sacrifice? O speak! he's gone.

[*The ghost retires towards the entrance of the mausoleum.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

Thou honored spirit of my lord, permit me
Thus on my knees to pour my sorrows forth,
Permit me in the tomb to——

GHOST.

[*At the entrance of the tomb.*

Stop: no farther:
Respect my ashes: when the time is come
I'll send for thee.

[*The ghost goes into the tomb, and the mausoleum closes.*

ASSUR.

Amazing!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Follow me,
My people, to the temple: be not thus
Dismayed: for know, the gentle shade of Ninus
Is not implacable; it loves your king,
And therefore will it spare Sémiramis:
Heaven that inspired my choice will now support it:
Haste then, and pray for me, and for Arsaces.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Representing the porch of the temple.

ARSACES, AZEMA.

ARSACES.

Do not oppress me in this hour of grief,
And aggravate my sorrows; I have borne
Enough already: this dread oracle
Affrights me; prodigies on every side
Disturb the course of nature: heaven deprives me
Of all, if Azema is lost.

AZEMA.

No more,
False man, nor to the horrors of this day
Add the remembrance of thy perfidy;
No more the terrors of Sémiramis,
The walking spectre, and the opening grave,
Appal me now; of all the prodigies

Which I have seen, thy base inconstancy
Hath shocked me most: go on, appease the shade
Of Ninus, and begin the sacrifice
With Azema; behold, and strike the victim.

ARSACES.

It is too much; my heart was not prepared
Against this cruel stroke: thou knowest, my soul
Prefers thee to the empire of the world:
What was the object of that fame in arms
I held so dear, of all my victories?
All my ambition hoped for was at last
To merit thee: Sémiramis, thou knowest,
Was dear to both; thy tongue unites with mine
To praise her; she was still the guardian god
That cherished and protected us; as such
We both revered her with that pious zeal
And chaste regard which mortals bear to heaven:
Judge of my spotless faith by my surprise
At the queen's choice, and mark the precipice
It leads us to, thence learn our future fate.

AZEMA.

I know it.

ARSACES.

Learn, that neither thou nor empire
Were destined for Arsaces; know, that son
Whom I must serve, the child of Ninus, he
Who must inherit here——

AZEMA.

Well; what of him?

ARSACES.

That Ninias, he who from his cradle lit
The torch of Hymen with thee, who was born
My rival and my master——

AZEMA.

Ninias!

ARSACES.

Lives;
And will be with us soon.

AZEMA.

Ha! then the queen——

ARSACES.

Even to this day deceived, laments his death.

AZEMA.

Ninias alive!

ARSACES.

It is a secret yet
Within the temple, and she knows it not.

AZEMA.

But Ninus crowns thee, and his widow's thine.

ARSACES.

Ay, but his son was born for Azema;
He is my king, so says the oracle,
And I must serve him.

AZEMA.

But love claims his own,
And will be heard in spite of all, Arsaces:
His orders are not doubtful, or obscure.
Love is my oracle, and that alone
Shall be obeyed. Ninias, thou sayest, yet lives,
Let him appear, and let Sémiramis
Recall her plighted faith to him; let Ninus
Rise from the tomb, to join the fatal knot
Made in our infant years; let Ninias come,
My king, thy master, and thy rival, fired

With all the love which once Arsaces had
For Azema, then see how I will slight
His proffered vows; then shalt thou see me scorn
The sceptre at my feet, and spurn a crown
Which is my due: where is he now? What secret,
What mystery veils him from us? Let him come;
But know, nor Ninias, nor Sémiramis,
No, nor the sacred spirit of his father
Risen from the tomb, nor all the powers of nature
Thrown in confusion, from my heart would wrest
The image of my perjured dear Arsaces:
Go, ask thy own, if it will dare to act
As mine hath done. What are those dreadful crimes
Which thou must expiate? if thou e'er shouldst break
The sacred tie that binds us, if thou art false,
I know no crime, no treachery like thy own.
I see the sage interpreter of fate
This way advancing, love will never plead
Thy cause with heaven, if thou betrayest me: go,
From Ninus' hand receive thy doom; remember,
Thy fate depends on heaven, and mine on thee.

[*Exit Azema.*

ARSACES.

Arsaces still is thine: stay, cruel maid:
How mingled is our happiness and woe!
What strange events that contradict each other——

SCENE II.

ARSACES, OROES, *the magi attending.*

OROES.

[*To Arsaces.*

Let us retire to yonder lonely walk;

I see you are much moved: prepare yourself
For strokes more dreadful.

[*To the magi.*

Bring the royal wreath.

[*The magi bring the coffer.*

This letter, and this sacred sword, to thee,
Arsaces, I deliver.

ARSACES.

Reverend father,
Wilt thou not save me from the precipice
That gapes before me? wilt thou not at length
Uplift the veil, that from my eyes conceals
My future fate?

OROES.

'Twill be removed, my son;
The hour is come, when in his dreary mansions,
Ninus from thee expects a sacrifice
That shall appease his angry spirit.

ARSACES.

What
Can Ninus ask, what sacrifice from me?
Must I be his avenger, when his son
Still lives? Let Ninias come; he is my king,
And I will serve him.

OROES.

'Tis his father's will,
Thou must obey him: an hour hence, Arsaces,
Be at his tomb, armed with this sacred sword,
And with this wreath adorned, which Ninus wore,
And which thyself did bring to me.

ARSACES.

The wreath
Of Ninus!

OROES.

'Tis his royal will that thus
Thou shouldst appear, to offer up the blood
That must be shed; the victim will be there:
Strike thou, and leave the rest to him, and heaven.

ARSACES.

If he requires my life, I'll give it him:
But where is Ninias? thou speakest naught of him:
Thou hast not told me how his father gives
To me his kingdom and his queen.

OROES.

To thee
His queen! O heaven, to thee Sémiramis
Be given! Arsaces, the important hour
Which I had promised thee is come, when thou
Shalt know thy fate, and this abandoned woman.

ARSACES.

Great gods!

OROES.

'Twas she who murdered Ninus.

ARSACES.

She,
Saidst thou, the queen?

OROES.

Assur, that foul disgrace
Of human nature, Assur gave the poison.

ARSACES.

I'm not surprised at Assur's cruelty,
But that a wife, a queen, and such a queen,

The pride of sovereigns, the delight of nations,
That she should e'er be guilty of a crime
So horrible! it passes all belief.
How can such virtues and such guilt as hers
Subsist together!

OROES.

How indeed! the question
Is worthy of thy noble heart: but now
'Twere needless to dissemble, every moment
Is big with some new secret, horrible
To nature, who already whispers to thee
Her soft complaints; thy generous heart, I see,
Spite of thyself, is shocked, and mourns within thee:
But wonder not that Ninus from the tomb
Indignant rises on this seat of guilt;
He comes to break the horrid nuptial tie,
Woven by the furies, and expose to light
Unpunished crimes; to save his son from incest:
He speaks to, he expects thee: know thy father,
For thou art Ninias, and the queen's thy mother.

ARSACES.

Thou hast o'erpowered me in one dreadful moment
With such repeated wonders, that I stand
Astonished, and the night of death surrounds me.
Am I his son, and can it be?

OROES.

Thou art:
Ninus, the morn before he died, foresaw
His end approaching; knew the deadly draught
Which he had drunk was ministered to thee
By the same hand, and, dying as thou wert,
Withdrew thee from this wicked court: for Assur
Had poisoned thee that he might wed thy mother,

Thought to exterminate the royal race,
And open thus his passage to the throne:
But whilst the kingdom mourned thy loss, Phradates,
Our faithful friend, secreted and preserved thee;
With skilful hand the precious herbs prepared,
O'er Persia spread by her benignant God,
Whose wondrous power drew forth the latent venom
From thy parched limbs: his own son dying, you
Supplied his place, and still wert called Arsaces.
He waited patient for some lucky change,
But the great judge of kings had otherwise
Determined; truth at length descends from heaven,
And vengeance rises from the tomb.

ARSACES.

O God!
Enough already hast thou tried thy servant,
Or must I yield that life which you restored?
Yes: I was born midst grandeur, shame, and horror:
My mother—Ninus! O what deadly purpose—
But if the traitor Assur was alone
To blame, if he———

OROES.

[*Giving him the letter.*
Behold this paper here,
Too faithful witness of her guilt, then say
If yet a doubt remains.

ARSACES.

Haste, give it me,
And clear them all. [*He reads.*
Ha! *"Ninus to Phradates:*
I die by poison, guard my Ninias well,
Defend him from his foes: my guilty wife———"

OROES.

Needest thou more proof? this witness came from thee.
He had not finished; death, thou seest, broke off
The imperfect scroll, and stopped his feeble hand;
Phradates hath unfolded all the rest,
Read this, and learn the whole.

[*Gives him another paper.*

It is enough
That Ninus hath commanded thee, he guides
Thy steps, and leads thee to the throne, but says
He must have blood.

ARSACES.

[*After reading the paper.*

O day of miracles,
And you, ye dreadful oracles from hell,
Dark as the tomb which I must visit, how
Shall I unveil your secret purposes,
When he who is to make the sacrifice
Knows not his victim! Who shall guide my choice?
I tremble at it.

OROES.

Tremble for the guilty.
Amidst the horrors that oppress thy soul,
The gods will guide thee; deem not thou thyself
A common mortal, from the race of men
Thou art distinguished, set apart by heaven,
And noted by its signature divine,
Walk thou secure, though night conceals thy fate,
The gods of thy great ancestors employ thee
But as their instrument. What right hast thou
To litigate their power, and to oppose
Thy masters? Saved from death, as thou hast been,
Be thankful still; complain not, but adore.

SCENE III.

ARSACES, MITRANES.

ARSACES.

I cannot reconcile this strange event:
Sémiramis my mother! can it be?

MITRANES.

[*Entering in haste.*

My lord, the people in this hour of terror
Demand their king: permit me first to hail thee
The husband of Sémiramis, and lord
Of Babylon: the queen is hasting hither
In search of thee; I bless the happy hour
That gave her to thee: ha! not answer me!
Despair is in thy looks, thy lips are closed
In dreadful silence, thou art pale with terror,
And thy whole frame's disordered: what has passed?
What have they said?

ARSACES.

I'll fly to Azema.

MITRANES.

Amazing! can it be Arsaces? fly
A queen's embraces; scorn her proffered love;
Insult her choice; the royal hand that spurned
Kings for thy sake! thus are her hopes betrayed?

ARSACES.

Gods! 'tis Sémiramis herself; O Ninus,
Now let thy tomb in its dark bosom hide
Her crimes, and me!

SCENE IV.

SÉMIRAMIS, ARSACES.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Arsaces, all is ready,
We want but thee, great master of the world,
Whose fate, like mine, depends on thee; O haste,
And make our bliss complete! with joy I see
Thy brows encircled with that sacred wreath:
The priest, I know, was by the gods commanded
To crown thee with it; heaven and hell at once
Approve my choice, and by these signs confirm it:
Assur's seditious party, struck with awe
And holy reverence, tremble at my presence;
Ninus, at length propitious, hath required
A sacrifice, O haste, and give it him,
That we may soon be blest: the people's hearts
Are all with us, and Assur's threats are vain.

ARSACES.

[*Walking about with great emotion.*

Assur! away! in his perfidious blood
The parricide—we will revenge thee, Ninus.

SÉMIRAMIS.

What do I hear? just heaven! speakest thou of him,
Of Ninus?

ARSACES.

[*Wildly.*

Saidst thou not, his guilty hand

[*Coming to himself.*

Had shed—to arm against his queen! the slave,
That was enough to make me hate him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Haste then,
Receive my hand, and thus begin thy vengeance.

ARSACES.

My father!

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what looks are those, Arsaces?
Is this the soft submissive tender heart
Which I expected from thee, when I gave
My willing hand? That fearful prodigies,
And spectres rising from their dark domain,
Should leave the marks of horror on thy soul,
Alarms me not, I feel them too, but less
When I behold Arsaces: do not thus
O'erspread this fairest dawn of happiness
With sorrow's gloomy shade, but still appear
Such as thou wert when trembling at my feet,
Lest Assur e'er should be thy master; fear
Nor him, nor Ninus and his angry shade;
My dear Arsaces, thou art my support,
My lord, my husband.

ARSACES.

[*Turning aside from her.*
'Tis too much, O stop:
Her guilt o'erwhelms me.

SÉMIRAMIS.

How his soul's disturbed!
Alas! he wants that peace which he bestowed
On me.

ARSACES.

Sémiramis——

SÉMIRAMIS.

What wouldst thou? speak.

ARSACES.

I cannot: leave me, leave me: hence! begone.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Amazing! leave thee! can I e'er forsake
Arsaces? O explain this mystery to me,
And ease my tortured soul: it makes us both
Unhappy:—ha! despair is in thy aspect;
Thou chillest my veins with horror, and thy eyes
Are dreadful; they affright me more than heaven
And hell united to oppose my vows:
Scarce can my trembling lips pronounce, I love thee:
Some power invisible now leads me on
Towards thee, now withholds me from thy arms,
And mingles, how I know not, tenderest love
With sentiments of horror and despair.

ARSACES.

Hate me, abhor me.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Canst thou bid me hate thee?
Cruel Arsaces, no: I still must trace
Thy footsteps, still my heart must follow thine:
What is that paper which thou lookest on thus
With horror, whilst thy eyes are bathed in tears,
Does that contain a reason for thy coldness?

ARSACES.

It does.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Then give it me.

ARSACES.

I must not: darest thou—

SÉMIRAMIS.

I'll have it.

ARSACES.

Leave to me that dreadful scroll,
To thee 'twere fatal, I have use for it.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Whence came it?

ARSACES.

From the gods.

SÉMIRAMIS.

And wrote by whom?

ARSACES.

Wrote by my father.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what sayest thou?

ARSACES.

Tremble.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Give it me, let me know at once my fate.

ARSACES.

Urge it no more; there is death in every line.

SÉMIRAMIS.

No matter: clear my doubts, or I shall think
That thou art guilty.

ARSACES.

Ye immortal powers
That guide our steps, it is to your decrees
That I submit.

SÉMIRAMIS.

For the last time, Arsaces,
I here command thee, listen, and obey.

ARSACES.

[*Giving her the letter.*

O may thy justice, heaven, be satisfied!
And this the only punishment that e'er
Shall be inflicted on her! now 'tis past,
And thou wilt know too much.

[*She reads.*

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*To Otanes.*

What do I read?
Support me, or I die.

[*She faints.*

ARSACES.

She sees it all.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Coming to herself, after a long silence.*

Delay not, but fulfil thy destiny:
Punish this guilty, this unhappy wretch,
And in my blood wash out the deadly stain.
Nature deceived is horrible to both,
Avenge thy father, strike, and punish me.

ARSACES.

No: let the sacred character I bear,
The name of son, preserve me from that crime!
Much rather would I pierce the heart of him
Who still reveres thee, the poor lost Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Kneeling.*

Be cruel as Sémiramis; she felt
No pity, therefore be the son of Ninus,
And take my life: thou wilt not; nay, thy tears
Even mix with mine: O Ninias, 'tis a day
Of horrors, yet there's pleasure in this pain.
Before thou givest me what I have deserved,
The stroke of death, let nature's voice be heard:
O let a guilty mother's tears bedew
That dear, that fatal hand.

ARSACES.

I am thy son,
'Tis not for thee, whate'er thy guilt, to fall
Thus at my feet: O rise, thy Ninias begs,
He loves thee still, still vows obedience to thee,
Respect and purest love: consider me
As a new subject, only more submissive,
More humble, than the rest; I hope, more dear.
Heaven that restores thy son is sure appeased:
The gods who pardon thee reserve their vengeance
For Assur; leave him to his fate.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Receive
My crown and sceptre, I have much disgraced them.

ARSACES.

Still, I beseech you, hold me ignorant
Of all, and let me with the world adore you.

SÉMIRAMIS.

O no: my guilt's too flagrant.

"I AM THY SON; 'TIS NOT FOR THEE,
WHATE'ER THY GUILT, TO FALL
THUS AT MY FEET"

ARSACES.

But repentance
May blot it out.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ninus hath given to thee
The reins of empire, thou must not offend
His vengeful spirit.

ARSACES.

O it will relent
At thy remorse, and soften at my tears.
Otanes, in the name of heaven, preserve
My mother, and conceal the horrid secret.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SÉMIRAMIS, OTANES.

OTANES.

O 'twas some god that smiled propitious on thee,
Who thus prevented these abhorred nuptials;
Whilst nature shuddered at the approaching danger,
Gave thee a son, and saved thee thus from incest.
The oracles of Ammon, and the voice
From hell, the shades of Ninus, all declared
The day appointed for thy second marriage
Should end thy sorrows, but they never said
That marriage e'er should be accomplished: No:
The nuptials were prepared: thou hast fulfilled
Thy destiny: thy son reveres thee still:
Mild is the justice of offended heaven,
Which only asks a private sacrifice:
This day Sémiramis shall still be happy.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Alas! there is no happiness for me,
Otanes: Ninias smiles indeed upon me:
A mother's sorrows for a time will plead
More strongly with him than the blood of Ninus,
And my past crimes; but soon his tenderness
And filial love may change perhaps to wrath
And fierce resentment for a murdered father.

OTANES.

What fearest thou from a son? what dire presage—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Fear is the natural punishment of guilt,
And still attends it: this detested Assur,
Has he attempted aught, say, does he know
What passed of late, and who Arsaces is?

OTANES.

The dreadful secret still remains unknown;
The shade of Ninus is by all revered;
But how to comprehend the oracle
They know not; how they must avenge his ashes;
How serve his son—the minds of men are struck
With wild astonishment, in silence now
They wait the hour when the self-opened tomb
Shall banish all their fears, and make them happy.
Meantime the soldiers are in arms, the people
Crowd to the altars; wretched Azema,
Trembling and pale, with terror in her looks,
Walks round the tomb, and lifts her hands to heaven;
Whilst Ninias stands astonished in the temple,
Prepared to strike his victim yet unknown:
The gloomy Assur meditates revenge,

Unites the remnants of his scattered party,
And forms some dark design.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I have kept fair
Too long already with him: seize the traitor,
Otanes, bear him to my son in chains;
Ninias shall soon appease eternal justice,
At least with Assur's blood, my vile accomplice.
Ninus, thou seest I am a mother still;
Thou seest my heart, O take it, take it all,
And may it rise a grateful sacrifice!
Ha! who approaches with such hasty steps?
How everything appals my fluttering soul!

SCENE II.

SÉMIRAMIS, AZEMA, OTANES.

AZEMA.

O Queen, forgive me if I come uncalled;
But terrors worse than death have forced me thus
To clasp thy knees, and beg thy royal mercy—

SÉMIRAMIS.

What wouldst thou, princess? speak.

AZEMA.

To snatch a hero
From instant danger, stop a traitor's hand,
And save Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ha! what hand? Arsaces!

AZEMA.

He is thy husband, Azema's betrayed,
He lives for you alone; no matter—

SÉMIRAMIS.

He

My husband! gods!

AZEMA.

The sacred tie that binds you—

SÉMIRAMIS.

The tie is dreadful, impious, and abhorred:
Arsaces is—but speak, go on; I tremble:
What dangers? haste, and tell me.

AZEMA.

Well thou knowest,
Perhaps this very moment, whilst I ask
Thy aid, perhaps—

SÉMIRAMIS.

Well, what?

AZEMA.

That demigod
Whom we adore, demands the sacrifice
Within the dreary labyrinths of the tomb:
What are the crimes Arsaces must atone for
I know not.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Crimes! just heaven!

AZEMA.

But impious Assur
Hath sworn to violate that sacred place
Which mortals dare not enter.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Ay! indeed!
Hath Assur sworn it?

AZEMA.

In the dead of night
The wily traitor had long since secured
A safe retreat, if e'er occasion called,
Within the secret windings of the tomb,
Where now he means to do the bloody deed,
To brave the powers of hell, and wrath of heaven;
With sacrilegious hand he would destroy
The generous Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

Heaven! what sayest thou?
By what detested means?

AZEMA.

Believe a heart
By love enlightened, and by love inspired:
I know the traitor's rank envenomed hatred,
Marked how the trembling faction by his zeal
Revived; I pried into their secret councils,
Pretended to unite his cause with mine,
And join our interests; I have looked into him,
Have wrested from his heart the fatal secret.
Boldly he marches on, and hopes to pass
Unpunished: well he knows that none dare enter
That holy place, not Oroes himself:
Thither he's gone: meantime his slaves report
Arsaces is the victim that must die
For Babylon, and Ninus in his blood
Shall satiate his revenge: the nobles meet,
The people murmur; Ninus, Assur, heaven,
Are all incensed: I tremble for Arsaces.

SÉMIRAMIS.

My dearest Azema, heaven speaks by thee:
It is enough: I see what must be done.
Repose thyself with safety on a mother;
Daughter, our danger is the same; go thou,
Defend thy husband, I will save my son.

AZEMA.

O heaven!

SÉMIRAMIS.

I meant to wed him, but the gods
In mercy have forbade it: they inspire
A hapless mother now—but time is precious;
Go: leave me here, and in my name command
The nobles, priests, and people, to attend me.

[*Azema goes into the porch of the temple, and Sémiramis advances toward the tomb.*

Thou shade of Ninus, lo! I fly to avenge thee;
The hour is come when thou didst promise me
Admittance to thy tomb; I have obeyed thee,
Called by thy voice, behold me here to save
My son. Ye guards that wait around my throne
Approach: henceforth Arsaces is your king;
No more obedient to Sémiramis,
Observe his laws, to him the sovereign power
I here resign: be you his subject now,
And his defenders.

[*Guards appear, and range themselves on each side at the further part of the stage.*

Gracious heaven! protect me.

[*She goes into the tomb.*

SCENE III.

AZEMA.

[*Returning from the porch of the temple to the front of the stage.*

What can she purpose? O it is too late
To save him now; I know not what to think:
'Tis wondrous all; O 'tis a dreadful moment,
Arsaces! Ninias! ye immortal powers
Who guide our fate, O say, did you restore
My loved Arsaces but to snatch him from me?

SCENE IV.

AZEMA, NINIAS.

AZEMA.

Ha! Ninias! can it be? Art thou indeed
Great Ninus' son, my sovereign, and my husband?

NINIAS.

O! thou beholdest me, Azema, ashamed
To know myself, sprung from the blood of gods,
And shuddering at the thought: O! Azema,
Remove my terrors, calm my troubled soul,
Strengthen my arm upraised to avenge a father.

AZEMA.

Take heed how thou performest that dreadful office.

NINIAS.

He hath commanded, and I must obey.

AZEMA.

Ninus would never sacrifice his son:
Impossible!

NINIAS.

What says my Azema?

AZEMA.

Ne'er shalt thou enter that abhorred place,
For know, a traitor lies in wait for thee.

NINIAS.

Who shall withhold or terrify Arsaces?

AZEMA.

Thou art the victim to be offered there:
With sacrilegious steps the impious Assur
Profanes the sacred tomb, and rashly dares
To violate its privilege divine:
He waits thee there.

NINIAS.

Good heaven! then all is plain;
I'm satisfied: the victim is prepared;
My father, poisoned by the wicked Assur,
Demands the traitor's blood: instructed thus
By Oroes, and conducted by the gods,
Armed by the hand of Ninus' self, I go
To punish the assassin: thither led
By heaven's eternal justice, my weak hand
Is but the instrument of power divine:
The gods do all, and my astonished soul
Yields to that voice which must decree my fate:
Spite of ourselves, our ways are noted down,
Marked, and determined: prodigies are spread
Around the throne, and spirits called from hell
To wander here: but fearless I obey,
Believe, and trust in heaven.

AZEMA.

Whate'er the gods
Have done but fills my soul with sad dismay:
Ninus was loved by them; yet Ninus perished.

NINIAS.

But now they will avenge him: cease thy plaints.

AZEMA.

Oft have they chose the purest victim, oft
Have shed the blood of innocence.

NINIAS.

No more;
They will defend whom thus they have united:
They by a father's voice exhorted us,
Gave me a throne, a mother, and a wife.
Soon shalt thou see me sprinkled with the blood
Of the vile murderer; from the tomb those gods
Shall lead me to the altar; I obey;
It is enough: the rest be left to heaven.

SCENE V.

AZEMA.

[*Alone.*

O guard his footsteps in this fatal tomb!
Ye powers inscrutable, whose blood must flow
This day? I tremble for the event, and dread
The hand of Assur, long inured to slaughter;
Even on his father's ashes may he shed
The blood of Ninias: O may the dark womb
Of hell receive and swallow up his rage!
Ye lightnings blast him! O illustrious shade
Of Ninus, wherefore wouldst thou not permit

A wretched wife to go with her dear lord?
O guide, support him in this place of darkness!
Did I not hear the voice of Ninias mixed
With deadly groans? O would this sacred tomb,
Which I profane, but open to my wishes
The gate of death!—I will descend:—I go—
Hark! the earth shakes, and dreadful lightnings flash
Athwart the skies: fear, hope, despair—he comes.

SCENE VI.

NINIAS, *a bloody sword in his hand,* AZEMA.

NINIAS.

O heaven! Where am I?

AZEMA.

O! my lord, you're pale,
And bloody, frozen with horror.

NINIAS.

'Tis the blood
Of the vile parricide: I wandered down
Even to the bottom of the tomb; my father
Still led me onward through its winding paths,
He walked before, and pointed out the place
Of my revenge: there, by the imperfect light
That glimmered through the dreary vault, I saw,
Or thought I saw, upraised the murderer's sword:
Methought he trembled; guilt is ever fearful:
Twice did I plunge my sword into his heart,
And with my bloody arm, which rage had strengthened,
Had dragged him in the dust towards the place

Whence the dim rays of light appeared: and yet
I own to thee, his deep heart-rending sighs,
The mournful sounds, imperfect as they were,
That reached my ears, his humble vows to heaven,
With that repentance which in his last hour
Seemed to possess his soul, the hallowed place,
The voice of pity, which, revenge once o'er,
Calls loudly on us, with I know not what
Of dark mysterious terror, shook my soul,
And made me leave the bleeding victim there.
What can this trouble, this strange horror mean
That dwells upon me, Azema? My heart
Is pure, ye gods, my hands are innocent,
Stained only with the blood you bid me shed;
I've served the cause of heaven, and yet am wretched.

AZEMA.

The dead are satisfied, and nature too:
Come let us quit this horrid place, and seek
Thy mother, she shall calm thy troubled mind:
Since Assur is no more———

SCENE VII.

NINIAS, AZEMA, ASSUR.

[*Assur appears at a distance with Otanes, surrounded by guards.*

AZEMA.

O heaven! he's there.

NINIAS.

Assur!

AZEMA.

O haste, ye ministers of heaven,
Ye servants of the king, defend your master.

SCENE VIII.

OROES, *the high priest, with the magi and people assembled,* OTANES, NINIAS, AZEMA, MITRANES,

ASSUR.

[*Disarmed.*

OTANES.

They need not: by the queen's command I've seized
The traitor, who attempted to profane
Yon sacred monument, and enter there:
I shall deliver him to thee.

NINIAS.

Alas!
What victim then hath Ninias sacrificed?

OROES.

Heaven is appeased, and vengeance now complete.
Behold, ye people, your king's murderer.

[*Pointing to Assur.*

Behold, ye people, your king's successor.

[*Pointing to Ninias.*

'Tis Ninias, Babylon's lost prince, restored:
He is your sovereign, know him, and obey.

ASSUR.

Thou Ninias!

OROES.

Ay; 'tis he: the guardian god,
Who saved him from thy rage, hath brought him hither;
That god whose vengeance hath o'erthrown thee.

ASSUR.

Ha! did Sémiramis then give thee life?

NINIAS.

She did, and power withal to punish thee:
Guards take him hence, and rid me of a monster.
He was not worthy of my sword; to fall
By Ninias' hand had been a death too glorious.
The victim hath escaped me; let him die,
Even as he lived, with infamy: away.

ASSUR.

It is my heaviest punishment to see
Ninias my sovereign: but 'tis pleasure still
To leave thee more unhappy than myself;

[*Sémiramis appears at the foot of the tomb, wounded, and almost dead, one of the magi supporting her.*

Look yonder, and behold what thou hast done.

[*Pointing to Sémiramis.*

NINIAS.

Whom have I slain?

AZEMA.

Fly, my dear Ninias, fly
This fatal place.

MITRANES.

What hast thou done?

OROES.

[*Placing himself between Ninias and the tomb.*

Away;
And cleanse those bloody hands: give me the sword,
That fatal instrument of wrath divine.

NINIAS.

No: let me plunge it to my heart.

[*He attempts to destroy himself, the guards interpose.*

OROES.

Disarm him.

SÉMIRAMIS.

[*Brought forward and seated on a sofa.*

Revenge me, O my son; some base assassin
Has slain thy mother.

NINIAS.

O unhappy hour;
Unheard of guilt! for know, that base assassin,
That monster was—thy son: this hand hath pierced
The breast that nourished and supported me:
But soon thou shalt have vengeance, Ninias soon
Shall follow thee.

SÉMIRAMIS.

I went into the tomb
To save thee, Ninias; thy unhappy mother—
But from thy hands, I have received the fate
I merited.

NINIAS.

This last, this fatal stroke,
Sinks deep into my soul: but here I call
Those gods to witness who conducted me,
Those who misled my steps—

SÉMIRAMIS.

No more, my son:
Freely I pardon thee, and only make
This last request, that those dear hands may close
My dying eyes.

[*He kneels.*

A mother begs it of thee:
Thy heart I know was stranger to the deed:
O would that I had been as innocent
When Ninus died! but I have suffered for it.
Henceforth let mortals know, that there are crimes
Offended heaven never can forgive.
O Ninias, Azema, let your blessed union
Blot out my crimes: come near your dying mother;
Give me your hands; long may ye live and reign
In happiness! that hope still gives me comfort,
And mingles joy even with the pangs of death.
It comes, I feel it. O! my children, think
On your Sémiramis, O do not hate
My memory,—O my son, my son—'tis past.

OROES.

Her eyes are sunk in darkness: help the king
And guard his life. Learn from her sad example,
That heaven is witness to our secret crimes:
The higher is the criminal, remember,
The gods inflict the greater punishment;
Kings, tremble on your thrones, and fear their justice.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

CATILINE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Cicero,	Septimus,
Cæsar,	Crassus,
Catiline,	Clodius,
Aurelia,	Cethegus,
Cato,	Lentulus-Sura,
Lucullus,	Conspirators,
Martian,	Lictors.

The Scene represents, on one side, the palace of Aurelia; on the other the temple of Tellus, where the senate assembled: At a distance, a gallery communicating to some private passages that lead from the palace of Aurelia to the vestibule of the temple.

In his preface to this play Voltaire says:

"The learned will not here meet with a faithful narrative of Catiline's conspiracy: a tragedy, they very well know, is not a history, but they will see a true picture of the manners of those times: all that Cicero, Catiline, Cato and Cæsar do in this piece is not true, but their genius and character are faithfully represented: if we do not there discover the eloquence of Cicero, we shall at least find displayed all that courage and virtue which he showed in the hour of danger. In Catiline is described that contrast of fierceness and dissimulation which formed his real character; Cæsar is represented as growing into power, factious, and brave; that Cæsar who was born at once to be the glory and the scourge of Rome."

CATILINE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CATILINE.

[*Soldiers at the bottom of the stage.*

Yes, thou proud talker, thou vile instrument
Of a deluded people, soon thy power
Shall be no more; and thou whose savage virtue,
Inflexibly severe, destroys the nation
It means to save, imperious Cato, know
Thy doom is passed, thou and the tyrant senate
Must fall together; they who keep the world
In bondage shall themselves be slaves; their chains
Are forged already, and usurping Pompey
Shall pay for dear bought honors with his blood.
Cæsar, his haughty rival, shall oppose him,
His equal Cæsar: he who, like myself,
Was ever factious, shall assist my cause;
The snare is laid, and Cæsar shall prepare
The throne for Catiline; I'll make them all
Subservient to my purpose: Cicero's self,
The man whom most I hate, shall be my friend:
My wife too may be useful, and may prove
A step to greatness: fathers, husbands, all
Those empty names mistaken mortals call
Most sacred, hence, I give you to the winds:
Ambition, I am thine.

SCENE II.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS.

CATILINE.

Well, my Cethegus,
Whilst Rome and our designs are hid in night,
Say, hast thou called together our brave chiefs?

CETHEGUS.

Even here, my lord, beneath this portico,
Safe from the consul's prying eyes, and near
That impious scene where our proud tyrants sit,
Thy friends shall meet—already they have signed
The solemn compact, and are sworn to serve thee.
But how stands Cæsar, will he second us?

CATILINE.

He is a turbulent unruly spirit,
And acts but for himself.

CETHEGUS.

And yet without him
We never shall succeed.

CATILINE.

I've laid a snare
He cannot escape: my soldiers, in his name,
Shall seize Præneste—he's been long suspected.
This will confirm his guilt—the furious consul
Shall soon accuse him to the senate—Cæsar
Will hazard all to satiate his revenge.

I'll rouse this sleeping lion from his den,
And make him roar for me.

CETHEGUS.

But Nonnius still
Rules in Præneste; he's a friend to Rome.
In vain already thou hast tried to tempt
His stubborn virtue—what must be his fate?

CATILINE.

Thou knowest I love his daughter, though I hate
Her surly father: long he strove in vain
To thwart our mutual passion, and prevent
Our private marriage, which at last the churl
Unwillingly consented to: he feared
To incur his angry party's high displeasure
And the proud consul's—but I've made his pride
Subservient to our purpose—he is bound
By solemn oaths to keep our marriage still
A secret: Sura only and Cethegus
Are privy to it: this perhaps may serve
More purposes than one: Aurelia's palace
Conducts us to the temple; there I've placed
My instruments of ruin, arms, and firebrands,
To execute our great design: thy zeal
To friendship much I owe, but more to love.
Beneath the senate's sacred vault, beneath
The roof of Nonnius will we sacrifice
These tyrants—you, my friends, must to Præneste;
You to the capitol; remember whom
You serve, the oath that binds you, and the cause
You are engaged in—thou, my loved Cethegus,
Must watch o'er all, and guide the great machine.

SCENE III.

AURELIA, CATILINE.

AURELIA.

O Catiline, my lord, my husband, ease
My troubled heart, remove my doubts, my fears,
My horror, my despair—alas! what means
This dreadful preparation?—every step
I tread alarms me; why these soldiers, why
With arms and torches is my palace filled?
The days of Marius and of Sulla sure
Are now returned, and discord reigns amongst us:
Explain, my lord, this dreadful mystery:
Do not turn from me—by the sacred tie
That joins our hearts, by the dear babe thou lovest,
I talk not to thee of its mother's danger,
For thee alone I tremble: pity me,
Pity a wretched wife, and tell me all.

CATILINE.

Know then, my life, my fortune, and my fame,
Thy safety, and my own, the common cause,
Demand a conduct which thy fears condemn:
But if thou lovest me, let whate'er thou seest
Be buried in thy breast: I mean to save
Rome's better part; the senate and the people
Are disunited—danger threats the state
On every side; I've taken the best means
To make all well again.

AURELIA.

I hope thou hast;
But can we hide our hearts from those we love?

Canst thou deceive me? yet what thou hast said
Doubles my fears. Alas! thy looks are wild,
And full of horror. What will Nonnius say
When he shall see these dreadful preparations?
The voice of nature, and the tender names
Of father and brother oft have passed
Unheard and unregarded when the cause
Of Rome required it—well thou knowest our marriage
Gave much offence, and when my angry father
Returning, shall behold these sad effects
Of our unhappy union, what, my lord,
Must I expect? O why wilt thou abuse
The power which love has given thee o'er a heart
Devoted to thy service?—thou hast gained
A party, but consider well my father,
Cato, and Cicero, and Rome, and heaven,
Are all thy foes: Nonnius perhaps may come
This very day on purpose to destroy thee.

CATILINE.

Be not afraid, I know he cannot.

AURELIA.

How?

CATILINE.

Whene'er he comes he must approve our purpose:
I am not left at liberty to tell thee
What we design, suffice it that his interest
And mine are one: I know when he shall find
The fair result, he then will join with me
To pull down the proud tyrants he obeys:
Trust me, Aurelia, what I do shall prove
The fertile spring of everlasting glory
And honor to you both—

AURELIA.

Alas! the honor
I fear is doubtful, and the danger certain:
What seekest thou? wherefore wouldst thou urge thy fate?
Is it not enough to rank among the first
Of human kind, and rule the subject world?
Why wouldst thou mount the giddy heights of power,
And court destruction? my foreboding heart
Already sees, and trembles at thy danger.
Are these the promised joys of flattering love?
The peace I hoped for? I have lost it now
For ever: O, my lord, when last these eyes
Were in a short and broken slumber closed,
Methought I saw in flames imperial Rome;
Saw murders, deaths, and rivers stained with blood,
My father massacred in open senate,
And thee, my Catiline, amidst a band
Of vile assassins, breathing forth thy soul
In dreadful agonies: I rose, and fled
From these sad images to find my lord,
My guardian, my protector—thou art here,
And I, alas! am but the more unhappy.

CATILINE.

Away—thy omens fright not Catiline;
Complain not, but be resolute: I want
Thy courage, not thy tears, when I am serving
Thee and my country.

AURELIA.

Is it thus thou meanst
To serve her? O, my lord, I know not what
Thy purpose is, but were it fair and just
Perhaps I might long since have been consulted;

Our mutual interest claimed it from a husband:
If thou dissemblest with me, I have cause
To doubt, and to be wretched—Cicero
Has long suspected thee, and Rome thou knowest
Adores him.

CATILINE.

Whom? my hated rival?

SCENE IV.

CATILINE, AURELIA, MARTIAN.

One of the Conspirators.

MARTIAN.

Sir,
The consul comes this way—by his command
The senate meet; he wishes first to see
And speak with you.

AURELIA.

I tremble at his name.

CATILINE.

Why tremble at the name of Cicero?
Let Nonnius fear and reverence him, disgrace
His rank and character by mean submission;
I pity the weak senator, but hoped
To find in thee a noble soul: not thus,
Remember, acted thy brave ancestors:
Gods! that a woman, and a Roman, sprung
From Nero's blood, should thus be void of pride
Or of ambition! noble minds are ne'er
Without them.

AURELIA.

Mine perhaps thou thinkest is mean
And timid; cruelty alone with thee
Is courage; thy reproach is most unkind;
But know me better; know that this fond wife,
Whom thou contemnest, who has not power to change
Or soften thee, has more of Roman in her
Than thou canst boast; and, coward as she is,
Can teach thee how to die.

CATILINE.

How many cares
At once surround me!—Cicero comes—but him
I fear not: this Aurelia.—

SCENE V.

CICERO, CATILINE, *Chief of the Lictors.*

CICERO.

[*To the Chief Lictor.*

Do as I
Command you—I'll try if I can sound
This faithless heart; leave me alone with him:
Sometimes a villain may be wrought by fear
To better counsel, and renounce his purpose.
Who's there? the proud plebeian, chosen by Rome
To be her master?

[*Turns to Cataline.*

Ere the senate meet,
Catiline, I come for the last time to hold
The friendly torch, and save thy wandering steps
From the dread precipice of guilt and ruin.

CATILINE.

Who, thou?

CICERO.

Yes, I.

CATILINE.

And is it thus thy hate
Pursues me?

CICERO.

Call it pity—but observe me.
The capitol is weary of thy plaints,
Thy factious cries, and bold impertinence;
Rome, and the senate have, it seems, debased
The consul's dignity by choosing me:
Thy pride we know expected it, but how
Hadst thou deserved it? was it by the name,
Or family, thy valor, or the pride
Of a loose prodigal in shows and feasts
And idle pomp; could these entitle thee
To such exalted honors? couldst thou hope
To be the great dispenser of the laws,
To guide the mistress of the world who rules
O'er prostrate kings? had Catiline been what
He ought to be, I might perhaps to him
Have yielded the contested palm.—Hereafter
Thou mayest support the state, but to be consul
'Tis fit thou first shouldst be—a citizen.
Thinkest thou by vile reflections on my birth,
My fortune, and my fame, to taint my honor,
Or weaken the firm basis of my power?
In our corrupted days it is not name,
Or family, that Rome has need of: no:
'Tis virtue; and the pride of Cicero
Hath ever been, that he should nothing owe
To his forefathers—my nobility
Springs from myself, and thine may end in thee.

CATILINE.

It ill becomes a temporary power,
Like thine, to boast of its authority.

CICERO.

Had Cicero used that power as thou deservest,
Thou wouldst not have been here to question it:
Thou who hast stained our altars with pollution
And sacrilegious rage, thy days are numbered
But by thy crimes: thy merit is to dare,
To strike at all, dissemble, and betray:
Thou hast abused the precious gifts that heaven
Bestowed on thee for other purposes:
Sense, beauty, courage, and heroic warmth,
All the fair ornaments of human nature,
In thee are but the instruments of ill.
My voice, which still is raised to scourge the wicked,
And plead for the oppressed, hath spared thee yet;
Nor with the odious Verres ranked the name
Of Catiline; but long impunity
Hath made thee shameless, and insensible
Of all reproof—thou hast betrayed the state:
At Rome, and in Etruria all is discord,
And foul confusion; Umbria is revolted;
Præneste staggers in her faith; the soldiers
Of barbarous Sulla, drenched in blood, come forth
From their dark caves prepared for slaughter, armed
By cruel Mallius; all are leagued with thee;
Thy partisans declared, or secret friends,
All are united in one guilty bond,
And sworn to the destruction of their country:
I know thee for their chief, for I have eyes
On every side, and hands too, thou shalt find,
That, spite of thee, shall vindicate the cause
Of injured Rome; thy guilty friends shall feel

My justice too: thou hast beheld me long
But as thy rival, now behold thy judge,
And thy accuser, who will force thee soon
To answer for thy actions by those laws
Which thou so oft hast trampled on unpunished,
Those laws which thou contemnest, and I revenge.

CATILINE.

I've told you, sir, already, that your office
But ill excuses this indecent freedom:
But for that country's sake, whom both are bound
To serve, I pardon your unjust suspicions;
Nay, I do more, I honor your warm zeal;
Blind though it be, in such a cause 'tis just:
But do not thus reproach me for past errors,
For the wild follies of impetuous youth,
That soon are o'er; your senate is to blame,
I followed their example; pomp and pride,
Excess and luxury, the fruits of conquest,
Are the time's vices, not the native bent
Of Catiline's heart: I served the commonweal
In Asia as a soldier, as a judge
In Africa: spite of our domestic feuds,
Did I not make the name of Rome revered
Among the nations? I who have defended
Shall ne'er betray her.

CICERO.

Sulla too and Marius
Both served their country well, and then destroyed her.
Tyrants have all some specious show of virtue,
And ere they break their country's laws support them.

CATILINE.

If you suspect each brave and gallant soldier,
Let Cæsar, Pompey, Crassus be accused:
Why fix on me amongst so many? why
Am I the only object of your fears?
Have I deserved it?

CICERO.

That you best can tell.
But wherefore deign I thus to answer you?

CATILINE.

The more I plead in my defence, the more
Will Cicero condemn me: if as friend
Thou talkest to me, thou but deceivest thyself,
I am thy foe; if as a citizen,
So too is Catiline; if as a consul,
A consul's not a master, he presides
But in the senate, I defy him there.

CICERO.

Thou durst not; for I there can punish guilt:
If thou art innocent, I will protect thee;
If not, I charge thee, be not seen in Rome.

CATILINE.

This is too much: I will no longer bear
Thy insults, though I scorn thy vague suspicions:
Yet know I think the worst affront that thou
Couldst put on Catiline, would be to protect him.

CICERO.

[*Alone.*

Insolent traitor! means he thus to prove
His innocence by false affected pride?
Perfidious wretch, I'm not to be deceived,
Nor shalt thou thus escape the watchful eye
Of vengeance.

SCENE VI.

CICERO, CATO.

CICERO.

Well, my friend, hast thou prepared
For Rome's defence?

CATO.

Your orders are obeyed;
I have disposed the chiefs, and all are ready
To march as you direct them; but I fear
The people, nay the senate.

CICERO.

Ha! the senate?

CATO.

Ay—they are swollen with pride—and foul division
Will soon enslave them.

CICERO.

Much indeed I fear
Our vices will avenge the conquered world;
Our liberty and virtue are no more;
But Rome may still have hope whilst Cato lives.

CATO.

Alas! who serves his country often serves
A most ungrateful mistress—even thy merit
Offends the senate; with a jealous eye
It views thy greatness.

CICERO.

Cato's approbation
Is recompense enough; thy honest praise

Will more than balance their ingratitude;
On that and on posterity alone
I shall rely; let us perform our duty,
And leave the rest to heaven.

CATO.

How shall we stem
The torrent of corruption? when I see,
Even in this sacred temple, raised to virtue,
Infamous treason rise with shameless front:
Can we suppose that Manlius, that proud rebel,
Would dare advance his standard, and blow up
The flames of civil war, if greater powers
Did not support him, if some secret foe
Abetted not their vile conspiracy?
The leaders of the senate may betray us;
From Sulla's ashes may new tyrants rise:
My just suspicions light on Cæsar.

CICERO.

Mine
On Catiline; perfidious, sordid, rash,
And bold; he loves rebellion, and delights
In novelty; more dangerous than Cæsar;
I know him well; even now I parted from him:
What passed between us but confirms me more
In my suspicions; on his face I read
Rage and resentment, the determined pride
Of his fierce spirit, that no longer deigned
To hide its purpose, but stood forth, and owned
Its enmity to Rome.—I must discover
His bold compeers, perhaps I may prevent
His future crimes, and save my falling country.

CATO.

Catiline has friends, and much I fear the power
Of these united tyrants may prove fatal:

Our forces are in Asia, and at Rome
We are corrupted; but one upright man
May save the state.

CICERO.

If we unite, our country
Has naught to fear—in factions discord soon
Dissolves the tie: Cæsar perhaps may join them;
But, if I know him right, his noble soul
Will never stoop to serve a worthless tyrant;
He loves his country still, and hates a master;
Though soon the time will come when he shall strive
To be one; both are eager for applause,
And both ambitious: both are raised too high
To meet in friendship long; by their division
Rome may be saved; let us not tamely wait
To see our country's ruin, or behold
In shameful chains the masters of mankind.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS.

CETHEGUS.

At length the torch is lit to set on fire
Rome and the subject world; our army's nigh,
And all is ready for the great event.
Knowest thou meantime, my friend, what passes here?

CATILINE.

I know the consul's prudence, so he calls
His cowardice, which deeply ruminates
On future ills: like an unskilful pilot

He sets up every sail for every wind,
But knows not or which way the tempest comes,
Or whither it may drive him—for the senate,
I fear it not; that many-headed monster,
So proud of conquest and nobility,
Looks with an evil eye on Cicero;
I know it hates him, so does Cæsar; Crassus
Would gladly yield him up a sacrifice
To our resentment; on their jealousy
Depend my hopes——he's like a dying man,
With feeble arm he struggles for a while,
But soon shall sink beneath us and expire.

CETHEGUS.

Envy I know attacks him, but his tongue
Can soften all; he leads the captive senate.

CATILINE.

I brave him everywhere; despise his clamors,
And smile at his resentment: let him rail
To his last hour, and triumph in the shouts
Of his admirers, I have other cares
That sit more heavy on me.

CETHEGUS.

What should stop
Thy rapid progress in the paths of glory
And happiness? Canst thou have aught to fear?

CATILINE.

My numerous foes I heed not, 'tis my friends
I have most cause to dread; the jealousy
Of Lentulus, the aspiring soul of Cæsar,
And, above all, my wife.

CETHEGUS.

Shall Catiline
Be frightened at a woman's tears?—for shame,
Leave her to indulge her visionary fears:
I thought thou lovest her as a master should,
And madest her but the servile instrument
Of thy ambition.

CATILINE.

'Tis a dangerous one:
Rome and her child divide with me her love.
Curse on the name of Rome, that even beneath
The roof of Catiline those should dwell who love
Their country! But before the important hour
That must decide our fate, she shall be moved,
She and her son—be that thy care, Cethegus:
Our wives and children must not trouble us
In those distressful moments—but for Cæsar—

CETHEGUS.

What's to be done? if he refuse to join
Our cause, shall we proscribe him; shall the names
Of Cicero and of Cæsar be united?

CATILINE.

Let me consider—to cut Cæsar off—
That were a dreadful sacrifice; methinks
I cannot but admire him, and revere
In him the honor of the Roman name:
But where is Lentulus?

CETHEGUS.

O fear not him;
His pride we know will prompt him to believe
That thou with him wilt share the sovereign power.

CATILINE.

Let him believe it still! the credulous fool!
Thou seest, Cethegus, with what sublety
I'm forced to manage these imperious spirits;
Their rage, resentment, pride and jealousy:
Knowest thou he dares even to be Cæsar's rival?
To keep my friends within the pale of prudence
Will cost me much more trouble than the ruin
Of Cicero and Rome—to guide a party
Is of all tasks the hardest.——

CETHEGUS.

Lentulus
Is here, my lord.

SCENE II.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

SURA.

In spite of my remonstrance
You will rely on Cæsar, and confide
In him alone; Præneste's in his power,
And I must yield to him; but know I scorn it,
The blood of Scipio was not made to yield.

CATILINE.

I've joined with Cæsar, but depend not on him;
He may support our cause, or he may hurt it;
I use his name, but 'tis for your advantage.

SURA.

And what is there in Cæsar's name superior
To yours or mine? why must we meanly court
His favor? but because he's Pompey's rival

Rome makes a God of him.—I am thy friend;
Sura and Catiline may defy them all,
And without Cæsar make the world their own.

CATILINE.

We may—thy conduct and approved valor
Have ever been my best and surest hope;
But Cæsar is beloved, respected, feared;
The senate and the people all admire
And court him; statesman, general, magistrate;
In peace revered, and terrible in war;
A thousand ways he charms the multitude;
In short he will be necessary.—

SURA.

Say
Destructive rather—if to-day he shines
Our equal, by to-morrow he will prove
Our rival, and ere long perhaps our master;
Trust me, I know him well, and therefore think
Our party has not a more dangerous foe:
Perhaps his haughty soul may yield to thee,
But play the tyrant o'er the rest; for me,
I cannot, will not, brook it—I've devoted
My honor and my fortunes to thy service;
But I renounce my plighted faith, renounce
Thee and thy cause, if Cæsar is preferred.

CATILINE.

And so thou shalt—I'd sacrifice my life
Rather than e'er permit a haughty rival
To soar above us—Cæsar is our tool,
Our instrument; to-day I flatter him,
To-morrow can bring down his pride, perhaps
Do more—thou knowest our mutual happiness

And interest are my first and dearest care.
[*To Cethegus.*
Away, and let Aurelia be prepared:
Go; or her fond intruding love may ruin
Our deep laid schemes, and mar the great design:
Return some private way and meet me here,
I wait for Cæsar.

SURA.

Nothing's to be done,
I find, without him—but I'll wait the event.

CATILINE.

Farewell: remember I rely on thee
More than on Cæsar.—

CETHEGUS.

I shall execute
Your high command, and gather all our friends
Before the standard of great Catiline.

SCENE III.

CATILINE, CÆSAR.

CATILINE.

Hail, godlike Cæsar, thou whom from the days
Of Sulla I have ranked amongst my best
And dearest friends, whose fortunes I foretold:
Born as thou art to be the first of Romans,
How suits it with thy pride to be the slave
Of a plebeian, who forever thwarts
And braves thee to thy face? I know thou hatest him;
Thy piercing eye observes impatient Rome
Contending for her freedom, will not Cæsar

Assist his country to shake off her chains?
The cause is noble, and the fate of millions
Depends on this important crisis; thou
Wilt join us—lookest thou not with jealous eye
On Pompey still? dost thou not still abhor
The surly Cato? canst thou serve the gods
With half thy wonted zeal when the proud consul
Presides at the altar? will thy noble spirit
Bear these imperious rulers; soft Lucullus,
Sunk in the arms of luxury and sloth;
The greedy Crassus, grasping his large heaps
Of ill-got wealth, enough to purchase Rome
And all her venal sons? on every side
Or faction or corruption reigns; the world
Calls out on Cæsar; wilt thou hear her voice?
Wilt thou redress and save thy falling country?
Will Cæsar listen to his friend?

CÆSAR.

He will;
And if the senate do thee wrong, step forth
To plead thy cause; I never will betray thee;
But ask no more.

CATILINE.

Are these the utmost bounds
Of Cæsar's friendship, but to talk for him?

CÆSAR.

I've weighed the projects, and shall not oppose them;
I may approve, but would not execute.

CATILINE.

I understand you, you are on that side
Which fortune favors, and would stand aloof

To mark the progress of our civil wars,
And raise your fortunes on the common ruin.

CÆSAR.

No—I have nobler views; my hate of Cato,
My jealousy of Pompey, the renown
Of Cicero, conspire to make me wish
I might surpass them all; fair glory calls,
The banks of Seine, the Tagus, and the Rhine;
I pant for honor, and for victory.

CATILINE.

If conquest is thy aim, begin with Rome;
To-morrow we may reign the masters of her.

CÆSAR.

The enterprise is great, perhaps too bold;
But, to be open with thee, though 'tis worthy
Of Catiline, it suits not Cæsar.

CATILINE.

How!

CÆSAR.

I do not choose to serve.

CATILINE.

To share with Cæsar
Were no dishonor to the most ambitious.

CÆSAR.

But power supreme is not to be divided:
I'll not be dragged at Catiline's chariot wheels
To grace his triumph: as a friend I love thee;
But know that friend shall never be—my master:
Even Pompey shall not—Sulla, whom thy valor
Hath nobly followed in the race of glory,
Whose courage I admire, whose lawless rage

I ever shall abhor, enslaved proud Rome:
But he deserved the glorious prize, subdued
The Hellespont, and made Euphrates tremble:
Asia was conquered: Mithridates owned
His martial genius—but what noble deeds
Hast thou to boast? what kings hast thou subdued?
What seas has Catiline passed, what lands explored?
Thou hast the seeds of greatness in thy nature;
But to enslave thy country is above
Thy present powers, above the powers of Cæsar:
We have not strength, authority or name
For such an enterprise. Rome soon must fall:
But ere I will attempt to be her master,
I will extend her empire and her glory;
And if I forge my country's chains, at least
Will cover them with laurels.

CATILINE.

Mine, perhaps,
Is, after all, the shortest path to glory:
How did your boasted Sulla rise to empire?
He had an army, so has Catiline;
Raised by myself alone, and not, like his,
The gift of fortune; he observed with care
The favorable hour, and well improved it:
I have done more; have made the times and seasons
Subservient to me. Sulla was a king.
Wouldst thou be one? wilt thou be Cicero's slave,
Or rule with Catiline?

CÆSAR.

Neither. To be free,
For I no longer will dissemble with you,
I esteem Cicero; but love him not,
Nor fear him: though I love, I dread not thee.

Divide the senate if thou canst, pull down
The proud oppressors; thou hast my consent;
But hope no more, nor dare to think that Cæsar
Will ever be thy slave: I'll keep thy secret,
And be thy friend or foe, as thou deservest it.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE.

If he supports us not, even let him fall
The victim of his folly: Sulla knew
And would have cut him off, but Sulla dared not:
I know he is my secret enemy,
As such I shall beware of him.

SCENE V.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

SURA.

What says
The mighty Cæsar? is he friend or foe?

CATILINE.

His barren friendship only offers me
A feeble aid; but we can do without him:
Perhaps he may repent it; and meantime
We've better pillars to support the fabric.
Behold, the heroes come.

SCENE VI.

CATILINE, THE CONSPIRATORS.

CATILINE.

Hail, bold Statilius,
Valiant Autronius, noble Piso, hail,
Vargontes, and the rest of my brave friends,
The first of men, the conquerors of kings,
The great avengers of a world oppressed,
This seat of empire soon shall be your own:
The vanquished nations, which your valor gained,
Were ravished from you by usurping tyrants;
For the proud senate still your blood hath flowed;
For them Tigranes, Mithridates fell;
For them alone; and all your poor reward
Was but to stand at distance, and adore
Your haughty masters; but at length the hour
Of vengeance is approaching: be prepared
For no inglorious enterprise: I know
Your souls would scorn a victory cheaply bought;
But I will bring you noble conquests, full
Of danger and of glory: seize, my friends,
The golden opportunity: already
I see your foes expiring at your feet.
Rush on your prey, burn, plunder, and destroy;
But, above all, let union guide your counsels:
Even now Præneste falls: the brave remains
Of Sulla's scattered forces march towards us:
I shall command them, and Rome must be yours
Petreius vanquished, I shall clear my way
Even to the capitol: then you, my friends,
Shall rise to empire, to a throne disgraced

By worthless Romans, and by you restored
To its true lustre: Curius and his band
Will open me the gates; but tell me, friend,
The gladiatorian cohorts, where are they?
Will those brave veterans join our cause?

LENTULUS-SURA.

They will:
Myself shall lead them in the dead of night,
And arm them in this secret place.

CATILINE.

Mount Cælius—
Is that secured?

STATILIUS.

I've bribed the sentinels,
And all is safe.

CATILINE.

You to mount Aventine
Repair, and soon as Mallius shall display
His colors, light your torches, spread destruction
On every side; let the proscribed perish.
Let Cicero—ye have sworn it—be my first
My darling victim: Cæsar too must die,
And Cato; these removed, the senate soon
Will tremble and obey: already fortune
Declares for us, and blinds them to their ruin:
Within their walls, and almost in their sight
We lay the snares of death, and mark them out
For sacrifice: remember not to take up arms
Before the appointed time: we must surprise
Ere we destroy: let Cicero and Rome
Perish together, and the lightning blast
Before the thunder's threatening voice alarms them.
Call not this deed a foul conspiracy;
'Tis a just war declared against the foes

Of Rome and all mankind; reclaim your rights,
The empire of the world, which base usurpers
Had ravished from you.

[*To Cethegus and Lentulus-Sura.*

Haste, ye gallant leaders,
Haste to the senate: see your victims there:
Hear your proud consul roar; 'tis the last time
That he shall triumph there—now, worthy Romans,
Swear by this sword, that with the blood of tyrants
Shall soon be stained, to perish, or to conquer,
With Catiline.

MARTIAN.

By thee and by this sword
We swear with thee to perish or to conquer.

ANOTHER CONSPIRATOR.

Perish the senate! perish all who serve,
All who defend them! if there be amongst us
A traitor, let him die.

CATILINE.

Away, this night
Will finish all, and Rome shall be our own.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, MARTIAN, SEPTIMUS.

CATILINE.

Are all things ready? do our troops advance?

MARTIAN.

Even so, my lord; the faithful Mallius comes
Prepared to circle these devoted walls;

Our friends impatient brook not dull delay,
But urge each other to the bloody scene;
We wait but thy command; appoint the hour
When Rome must fall.

CATILINE.

Soon as I quit the senate
Begin the sacrifice: let this great day
Be sacred to destruction: but meantime
Take special care the consul's busy friends
Do not observe our motions.

CETHEGUS.

Were it not
Most prudent to destroy him in the senate?
He has alarmed the people, and foresees
Our every action.

CATILINE.

Knows he the revolt
Of Mallius? knows he Catiline's deep designs?
Knows he an army is approaching for me?
Fear not, my friends, ours is no common cause,
'Tis fit the means should be proportioned to it:
When vulgar mortals, grovelling and obscure,
Form ill-digested schemes, and idle plans
Of future greatness, if one slender wheel
Is broke, it overthrows the whole machine:
But souls like ours, a firm and chosen band,
Plans deeply laid, the conquerors of kings,
The sons of Mars, united to support
And raise each other, these must be superior
To Cicero's art, or Cicero's vigilance:
We've naught to fear.

CETHEGUS.

But is Præneste ours
In Cæsar's name?

CATILINE.

Ay; that was my first stroke
Of policy: the unsuspecting senate
Will be deceived: I've whispered it abroad,
That Nonnius hath conspired against the state,
And half our credulous fools believe the tale.
Ere he can clear his innocence, my army
Will be in Rome, and all secured: away,
Remove Aurelia: let no little cares
Intrude to stop or hurt the great design.

SCENE II.

AURELIA, CATILINE, CETHEGUS, ETC.

AURELIA.

[*A letter in her hand.*

There, Catiline, read Aurelia's fate and thine,
Thy crime and thy just sentence.

CATILINE.

What rash hand—
Ha! 'tis thy father's.

AURELIA.

Read it.

CATILINE.

[*Reads the letter.*

"Death too long
Hath spared me, and the child I loved too well
Must finish my sad days: at length I suffer

For my own follies, and that hapless marriage
Which I consented to; I know the plots
Of thy vile husband: Cæsar has betrayed us,
And would have seized Præneste: thou partakest
The treason: but repent, or perish with them."
But how could Nonnius e'er discover that
Which even the consul knows not?

CETHEGUS.

This may prove
Our ruin.

CATILINE.

[*To Cethegus.*
It may turn to our advantage.
Aurelia, I must tell thee all: this day
The world is armed in Catiline's defence:
Say, in the hour of danger wilt thou serve
A father or a husband?

AURELIA.

To be silent,
And trouble thee no more, were the commands
Which Catiline laid on his neglected wife,
Spite of her fond entreaties, prayers, and tears:
What hast thou further to desire?

CATILINE.

Away:
This moment, send that letter to the consul;
I have my reasons; I would have him know,
That Cæsar is as much to be suspected
As I am: he's accused, and Catiline not
So much as named: it is as I could wish.
Take with thee our loved infant, and return not
To bleeding Rome, till I am master there:
Then thou shalt reign with me: our marriage yet

Is kept a secret: I'll not have it known,
'Till at the head of our victorious army
I shall proclaim it loud to Italy,
And to the world: then shall thy haughty father,
As our first subject, humbly bend before thee,
And sue to be forgiven: begone, Aurelia,
And leave me to my fate. I would not wish
Thou shouldst partake my dangers or my cares:
This night prepare to meet a conqueror.

AURELIA.

O Catiline, meanest thou to destroy thy country?
Is this the day appointed for destruction?

CATILINE.

To-day I purpose to chastise my foes;
All is prepared.

AURELIA.

Begin then with Aurelia;
For I had rather perish by thy hand,
Than live to share thy guilt.

CATILINE.

O let the tie
That binds us—

CETHEGUS.

Drive not thus to desperation
A husband and a friend, who trusts his all
To thee; thou art entered in the paths of glory,
And to retreat were fatal.

AURELIA.

Misery
And sure destruction were Aurelia's fate:

From that unhappy moment, when by thee
And thy vile counsels led, I gave my hand
To Catiline; despised, neglected, long
Have I beheld, with eyes of detestation,
Your horrid plots: spite of myself you made me
A vile accomplice; but you know I loved,
And basely have imposed upon my weakness:
I blush to think how grossly you abused
A woman's fond credulity; but know
I'll no longer be guilty of a crime
Which I abhor: no longer serve a tyrant:
No, I renounce my vows, my faith to thee;
These hands shall rise against thee, thou vile traitor:
Henceforth I am thy foe. Strike, Catiline, strike;
Destroy me; carry into burning Rome,
For thy first victim, an expiring wife
Slain by thy hand; destroy the hapless infant,
Sad pledge of our detested nuptials: then,
Barbarian as thou art, complete thy guilt,
And in the blood of millions glut thy vengeance.

CATILINE.

And is the gentle, kind Aurelia then
Amongst my foes? thus in the noblest war,
That e'er was waged for freedom and for empire,
When Pompey, Cæsar, Cato, are subdued,
My worst of enemies at last are found
In my own house; I am deserted there
For an unworthy father: threatened too.

AURELIA.

I threaten guilt, and tremble for—a husband:
Even in my rage thou seest my tenderness;
Abuse it not, it is my only weakness:
But I would have thee fear—

CATILINE.

That word, Aurelia,
Was never made for Catiline—but hear me:
I love thee; yet presume not on thy power,
Nor think I e'er will sacrifice my friends,
My noble cause, my interest, and my fame,
Glory and empire: no, it is enough
If I forgive and pity thee, but know—

AURELIA.

The crown thy pride looks up to I despise:
I should behold it as the shameful mark
Of infamy: thou showest thy love for me
By pity and forgiveness; and I mine,
By holding back, if possible, thy hand
From guilt and error—therefore will I go—

SCENE III.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA, AURELIA, ETC.

LENTULUS-SURA.

We are discovered, lost, undone; our friends
Betrayed, our plots unravelled all; Præneste
Not yielded to us; Nonnius is in Rome;
One of our spies is seized, and has confessed;
Nonnius in open senate will accuse
His son-in-law; he's gone to Cicero,
Who knows too much already.

AURELIA.

Now behold
The fruits of guilt, and all thy great designs,
Thy boasted fortunes, empire, and the throne,
Which I despised: are thy eyes opened yet?

CATILINE.

[*After a long pause.*

This is a blow I thought not of; but say,
Wilt thou betray me?

AURELIA.

'Tis what thou deservest:
My country claims, and heaven demands it of me;
But I'll do more, I'll save both Rome and thee;
And though I have not all thy rage, may boast
Some of thy courage; love will make me brave:
Long since I saw thy danger, Catiline:
'Tis come, and now I will partake it with thee;
I'll see my father, and obtain thy life,
Or lose my own; I know he is forgiving,
Gentle, and mild: I know he loves Aurelia,
And will not urge too far a foe like thee,
Desperate and brave; I'll talk to Cicero
Who fears, and to the senate who adores thee;
They will be glad to think thee innocent;
Those whom we fear we readily forgive:
But let sincerest penitence atone
For thy past crimes: convicted guilt by that,
And that alone, can hope for pardon; though
I know it hurts thy pride, it must be done:
At least I hope I shall procure thee time,
Or to quit Rome, or to defend thyself:
I'll not reproach thee; even when most guilty
I loved, and in misfortune will not leave thee;
But rather die to save thy life and glory.
Farewell; let Catiline learn henceforth to trust me;
I have deserved it.

CATILINE.

Sad alternative;
It is most dreadful—but I yield to thee:

Remember that a husband's plea is stronger,
Much stronger than a father's: if I err,
The crime is thine.

AURELIA.

I'll take it all upon me;
Nay, even thy hatred, if it must be so;
I act for thee, and I'm satisfied.
Daughter, and wife, and Roman, every duty
Shall be performed; remember thine, and keep
Thy heart as pure and spotless as Aurelia's.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA, FREEDMEN.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Is this the bold and fearless Catiline,
Or Nonnius' timid son; a woman's slave;
Appalled by phantoms? how thy great soul shrunk
Soon as Aurelia spoke!

CETHEGUS.

It cannot be;
Catiline will never change; his noble soul
By opposition grows but more resolved:
Præneste lost, the senate our accusers,
We may be conquerors still, and make them tremble
Whilst they condemn us; we have noble friends,
And will deserve them.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Ere the signal's given
We may be seized; thou knowest at dead of night,
Just as the senate part, we had agreed

To execute our purpose: what, my friends,
Must be resolved on?

CETHEGUS.

[*To Catiline.*

Catiline, thou art silent,
And tremblest too.

CATILINE.

I tremble at the blow
Which I shall strike; my fate demands it of me.

LENTULUS-SURA.

I've no dependence on Aurelia: all
That we can hope for is to sell our lives
As dearly as we can.

CATILINE.

I count the moments,
And weigh each circumstance; Aurelia's tears
And flattery will a while suspend our fate;
Cicero on other business is detained,
And all is safe; let me have arms and men,
No matter who they are, or slaves or free,
Assassins, robbers, if they will but fight,
We'll have them: thou brave Septimus, and thou
My dearest Martian, whose approved zeal
I shall depend on, must observe Aurelia;
And Nonnius; when they're parted, talk to him
About his daughter; tell him of her danger,
Draw him by artful means to the dark path
That leads to the Tiber, seize the lucky moment,
And hurl him—ha! who's this?

SCENE V.

CICERO, CATILINE, CETHEGUS, ETC.

CICERO.

Audacious traitor,
Where art thou going? speak, Cethegus, who
Assembled you?

CATILINE.

We'll tell thee in the senate.

CETHEGUS.

There we shall see if thou art authorized
Thus to pursue us.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Or what right
The son of Tullius has to question us.

CICERO.

At least I have a right to ask of these,
Who brought them here: these are not like yourselves,
Of senatorial rank; away with them.
To prison.

CATILINE.

Darest thou thus on mere suspicion
Confine a Roman; where's our liberty?

CICERO.

They are of thy council, that's sufficient cause;
Tremble, thyself; lictors, obey.

[*The lictors carry off Septimus and Martian.*

CATILINE.

'Tis well:
Go on, proud consul, and abuse thy power,
The time will come when thou shalt answer for it

CICERO.

Instant I will examine them, hereafter
Thus may I treat their masters; Nonnius knows
All thy designs, Prænestе's mine, and Rome
Prepared for her defence; we soon shall see
Which most prevails, or Catiline's artifice
Or Cicero's vigilance: I do not preach
Repentance and forgiveness to thee; no,
I talk of punishment, thou mayest expect it:
Come to the senate; follow if thou darest.

SCENE VI.

CATILINE, CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

CETHEGUS.

Must we at last then bend to Cicero,
And own his hated power?

CATILINE.

To the last hour
I will defy him: still his curious soul
Pries into all, but can discover nothing:
Our friends will only lead him more astray,
By holding out false lights that will misguide
His wandering footsteps: in that fatal scroll
Cæsar's accused; the senate is divided,
And Manlius with his army's at the gate:
You think that all is lost, but follow me,
And mark the event; we shall be conquerors still.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Nonnius, I fear, will make it all too plain.

CATILINE.

But he and Cicero shall never meet;
Depend on that; away, address the senate
With confidence, and leave the rest to me:
But whither am I going?

CETHEGUS.

Ha!

CATILINE.

Aurelia!
O gods! what shall I do with that proud heart?
Remove her from me: if I see my wife,
Bold as I am, I shall relapse: away.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Scene represents the place prepared for the reception of the Senate, with part of the gallery leading from Aurelia's palace to the temple of Tellus; a double row of benches in a circular form, with a raised seat for Cicero in the middle of it.

CETHEGUS, LENTULUS-SURA.

LENTULUS-SURA.

These reverend fathers are exceeding slow,
I thought ere this they would have met; perhaps
Uncertain yet, and trembling for their fate,
They know not how to act.

CETHEGUS.

The oracle
Of Rome, (for so he deems himself,) engaged
In a continued round of toil, is busied
In questioning his prisoner Septimus,
Who will perplex him more; 'tis that retards
Their meeting.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Would to heaven that we already
Had taken up arms! I own I dread the senate.
That reverence and attachment to the state,
That sacred name of country, which awakes
The sense of honor in each patriot breast;
I like it not.

CETHEGUS.

'Tis nothing but a name,
A word without a meaning; in the days
Of our forefathers men respected it.
Save a few stubborn stoics, none retain
The memory of it; Cicero has raised
Suspicions only; Cato's credit's lost;
Cæsar is for us, what have we to fear?
Defend yourselves, and Rome will be your own.

LENTULUS-SURA.

But what if Catiline, by an artful wife
Seduced, at last should leave us; we have all
Our weaknesses, and well thou knowest Aurelia
Can lead him as she lists; he loves, esteems,
And may be ruled by her.

CETHEGUS.

His love will yield
To his ambition.

LENTULUS-SURA.

Thou beheldest him tremble.
In short, my friend, when tender ties like these—

CETHEGUS.

[*Taking him aside.*

Cato approaches, let us listen to him.

[*Lentulus-Sura and Cethegus sit down at one corner of the Senate-house.*

SCENE II.

CATO *enters the Senate with* LUCULLUS, CRASSUS, FAVONIUS, CLODIUS, MURENA, CÆSAR, CATULLUS, MARCELLUS, ETC.

CATO.

[*Observing the two conspirators.*

Lucullus, mark those dangerous men; behold them
In secret conference; see, the blush of guilt
Glows on their cheeks at sight of me; already
Treason with bold and shameless front stalks forth
Amongst us, and the senate still dissemble
Their knowledge of it; Sulla's demon sure
Hath breathed its baneful influence o'er the souls
Of our blind rulers.

CETHEGUS.

Cato, thy rash censure
May cost thee dear.

CATO.

[*Sits down, the other senators take their places.*

The gods of Rome sometimes
Permit a traitor's crimes to pass unpunished;

They crushed our ancestors beneath the yoke
Of cruel tyrants; shall imperial Rome,
The mistress of the world, again submit
To slavery? no: the guilt she spared in Sulla,
In Catiline and Cethegus she may punish.

CÆSAR.

Cato, what meanest thou? thy outrageous virtue
Can serve no purpose but to make thee foes.

CATO.

[*To Cæsar.*

Cæsar is still the factious leader's friend,
The patron of corruption, and preserves
A soul unmoved whate'er his country suffers.

CÆSAR.

When danger calls, my country will not say
I am too calm, therefore complain not, Cato.

CATO.

I must complain, must weep the fate of Rome,
Deserted and betrayed: now where is Pompey?
Would he were here to save us!

CÆSAR.

Why not call
On Cæsar?

CATO.

Pompey loves his country.

CÆSAR.

That
Would I dispute with him.

SCENE III.

CICERO.

[*Entering with precipitation, the senators rise.*

Why waste ye thus in idle altercation,
The precious time when Rome is on the brink
Of ruin, whilst on you she calls for succor,
When the dread signal is already given?
Already is this land of freedom stained
With senatorial blood.

LUCULLUS.

O heavens!

CATO.

What sayest thou?

CICERO.

The equestrian cohort, formed by my command,
Were posted where they best might quell the foe;
Nonnius, my friend, that generous old man,
Who, amidst the crimes of this degenerate age,
Still uncorrupted, from Præneste came,
To guide us through this labyrinth of treason,
And lead our wandering steps to peace and safety,
When lo! two bloody ruffians rushed upon him,
And plunged their daggers in his faithful heart:
He fell: confusion followed, and wild uproar
Amongst the people: we pursued the traitors,
Spite of the multitude that thronged around them,
And night's dark shade to favor their escape:
One I have seized, and bound in chains; already
He has confessed that Catiline set him on.

SCENE IV.

CATILINE.

[*Standing up between Cato and Cæsar, Cethegus next to Cæsar, the Senate seated.*

Yes, reverend fathers, know, the deed was mine;
I slew your foes; 'twas Catiline who revenged
His injured country, and destroyed a traitor.

CICERO.

Barbarian, thou?

CATO.

And darest thou boast of it?

CÆSAR.

Remember, fathers, we've no right to punish
Before we hear him.

CETHEGUS.

Speak, defend thyself,
And triumph o'er the malice of thy foes.

CICERO.

Romans, where are we?

CATILINE.

Amidst evil days
And evil men, the horrors of foul discord
And civil war; amidst determined foes,
Whom I alone must conquer; Sulla's spirit
Inspires once more the haughty sons of Rome:
With grief I see expiring liberty,
With grief behold this reverend senate torn

By discord, horrors spread on every side,
And Cicero pouring in the senate's ear
Unjust suspicions: Cicero talks for Rome,
But I avenge her: I have shown her cause
Is dearer far to me than e'er it was
To your proud consul. Nonnius was the soul,
The leader of this foul conspiracy:
It was a dangerous crisis; I stepped forth
And saved you all: thus by a soldier fell
The daring Spurius; thus was Gracchus slain
By the brave Scipio: who shall punish me
For acting like a Roman? which of you
Will dare accuse me?

CICERO.

I, who know thy crime;
I, who can prove it—bring those freedmen here,
Let them be heard. Fathers, behold the man
Who has destroyed a senator of Rome:
Will ye permit him thus to speak, to boast
Of his foul deed, and call his crime a virtue?

CATILINE.

And will ye, Romans, let this vile accuser
Thus persecute your fellow-citizens,
Your best, your noblest friends? but know from me
What Cicero could not tell you, and improve
The important secret to your best advantage:
In his own palace, know, this impious man,
This vile betrayer, Nonnius, had concealed
Arms, torches, all the instruments of death
Designed for our destruction: if Rome lives,
She lives by me, and to this arm you owe
Your safety: send and seize them, and then say
What's due to Catiline from his thankless country.

CICERO.

[*To the lictors.*

Go you to the palace, bring with you the daughter
Of Nonnius—ha! thou tremblest.

CATILINE.

I? 'tis false:
Know, I despise this mean, this last resource
Of disappointed malice—fathers, say,
Have I not cleared myself? are you convinced!

CICERO.

I am, that thou art guilty: can ye think
That good old man was ever capable
Of such detested fraud? it was thy art,
Thy cunning, miscreant, to conceal from me
Thy treachery; therefore didst thou choose the palace
Of Nonnius to secrete thy instruments
Of vengeance; there thou wouldst have hid thy guilt:
Perhaps thou hast seduced his wretched daughter:
Alas! his family is not the first
Where thou hast carried sorrows, crimes, and death;
And now thou wouldst destroy thy country too;
Yet boldly darest, instead of punishment,
To call for approbation and reward.
O thou abandoned traitor, murderer,
Reviler, hypocrite; such titles suit
Thy boasted services. O you, who once
Stood forth the happy patrons of mankind,
The sovereign judges of the world, at length
Will you submit, to let a tyrant hold
Dominion o'er you, will you shut your eyes
And rush into the precipice? awake,

Revenge yourselves, or you partake his guilt:
This day or Rome or Catiline must perish:
Lose not a moment therefore, but determine:

CÆSAR.

Judgments too quickly made are oft unjust:
This is the cause of Rome, and therefore merits
Our strict attention: when our equals lag
Beneath the stroke of censure, we should act
With caution, and in them respect ourselves:
Too much severity suits none but tyrants.

CATO.

Too much indulgence here suits none but traitors.
What! balance 'twixt a murderer and Rome!
Is it not Cicero speaks, and shall we doubt?

CÆSAR.

These are suspicions only; give us proof:
The arms once found, and Nonnius' guilt confirmed,
Catiline deserves our praise.
[*Turning to Catiline.*
Thou knowest I'll keep
My word with thee in all things.

CICERO.

O my country!
O Rome! O gods! thus shall a hero plead
A traitor's cause; art thou the senate's friend,
And canst be Catiline's? henceforth Rome has naught
To fear but from her own ungrateful sons.

CLODIUS.

Rome is in safety; Cæsar loves his country,
And we should think with him.

CICERO.

It well becomes
A man like Clodius to unite with those
Who plan destruction, and delight in ruin:
But whereso'er I turn my eyes, they meet
With bold conspirators, or citizens
Cold and inactive in the cause of Rome:
Catiline, without or fear or danger, drives
The storm upon us; he proscribes the senate;
Already reaps in thought the bloody harvest;
Marks out his victims, threatens, and commands;
And when I point out the dread consequence,
Then Cæsar talks of senatorial rights,
And Clodius joins him: Cicero must be dumb:
Catiline has murdered Nonnius; he who takes
Another's life should lose his own; no rights,
No laws should plead for him: the first great care
Is to defend our country; but, alas!
That country is no more.

SCENE V.

THE SENATE, AURELIA.

AURELIA.

Ye great avengers
Of innocence oppressed, my only hope,
And thou, O consul, virtue's kind protector,
To thee my murdered father calls for vengeance:
O let me wash thy feet with tears—assist,

[*She falls at Cicero's feet; he raises her up.*

Avenge me: tell me, if thou canst, who slew
My father.

CICERO.

There he stands.

[*Pointing to Catiline.*

AURELIA.

O gods!

CICERO.

'Twas he
Who did the deed, and boasts of it.

AURELIA.

Good heaven!
Can it be Catiline? did I hear aright?
O bloody monster, didst thou murder him?

[*The Lictors support her.*

CATILINE.

[*Turning to Cethegus, and fainting in his arms.*
This is a dreadful sight—support me—this
Is punishment enough.

CETHEGUS.

Why droops my friend?
Aurelia calls for vengeance: but if Catiline
Has served his country, what has he to fear?

CATILINE.

[*Turning to Aurelia.*

Aurelia, 'tis too true—my cruel duty—
My country—think me not so base; Aurelia
Thou knowest my love, my tenderness—but ties
Of a more sacred nature, ties—

SCENE VI.

THE SENATE, AURELIA, CHIEF OF THE LICTORS.

CHIEF OF THE LICTORS.

My lord,
We've seized these arms.

CICERO.

At Nonnius's?

CHIEF LICTOR.

His house
Was the receptacle of all: our prisoners
Accuse him as the chief conspirator.

AURELIA.

Malice and calumny! the lying slaves
First take his life, and then destroy his fame:
The wretch whose murderous hand—

CICERO.

Go on—

AURELIA.

Just gods,
For what have ye reserved me?

CICERO.

Speak: let truth
In open day appear: but at the sight
Of him you tremble; your dejected eyes,
And sudden silence, show how much you dread
The tyrant.

AURELIA.

I have been to blame; Aurelia
Alone is guilty.

CATILINE.

No; thou art not.

AURELIA.

Hence,
Detested monster, I abhor thy pity,
Disclaim all converse, all relation with thee:
Alas! too late, I see my guilt; too late
Confess my crimes; yes, reverend fathers; yes,
Aurelia knew the traitor, and concealed him:
I asked for aid, but merit punishment;
My weakness may be fatal; Rome's in danger;
The world this day may be subverted: thou,
Thou traitor, ledst me to the dark abyss
Of infamy; thou madest my tenderness
Subservient to thy wicked purposes;
Curse on the guilty hour that gave my heart
To Catiline; to thee I have been faithful,
But false to heaven, and to my country; false
To my unhappy father: I betrayed,
And I destroyed him.

[*Whilst Aurelia is speaking, Cicero seems deeply affected.*

Ye avenging gods,
Ye sacred walls, and thou much injured spirit
Of my dear father, Romans, senators,
Behold my husband, your inveterate foe.

[*Turning to Catiline.*

Now, miscreant, mark, and imitate Aurelia.

[*Stabs herself.*

CATILINE.

O wretched Catiline!

CATO.

O dreadful day!

CICERO.

[*Rising.*

'Tis worthy of this guilty age.

AURELIA.

O consul!
There was a letter sent you—murder threatens
On every side—take heed—alas!—I die.

[*Aurelia is carried off.*

CICERO.

Let her have needful succor: Aufidus,
Search for that paper—still are ye in doubt;
Still will ye suffer this vile murderer
To lord it o'er the senate, shall the deaths
Of Nonnius and Aurelia pass unpunished?

CATILINE.

The guilt was thine: thy rancor and fell hatred
Of Catiline urged him to the deed; ambition
Inspired us both; thy happier fortune soared
Above me, thou hast been the cause of all:
I hate thee, Cicero, hate Rome itself
For loving thee: long have I sought thy ruin,
And I will seek it still: the wrongs I suffer
Shall be revenged on thee; thy blood shall pay
For mine; inconstant Rome, that now adores thee,
Shall one day see with joy the mangled limbs
Of her proud consul scattered o'er the senate:
Remember Catiline has foretold thy fate;
I hasten to accomplish it: farewell.

CICERO.

Guards, seize the traitor.

CETHEGUS.

Let them if they dare.

LENTULUS-SURA.

The senate is divided: we defy thee.

CATILINE.

The war then is declared: friends, follow me,
We must to battle: the uncertain senate
Will think on't, and determine at their leisure.

[*He goes out with some senators of his party.*

CICERO.

Now, ye illustrious conquerors of the world,
Which will ye choose, or slavery or empire:
Where is the freedom, where the majesty
Of ancient Rome? where is her lustre now?
'Tis faded all: awake, my slumbering country;
Lucullus, Cæsar, and Murena, listen;
O listen to the voice of Rome; she calls
Aloud for help, demands some gallant leader
To fight for her; equality of rank
Must be reserved for happier times, the Gauls
Are here, Camillus must be found, we want
A chief, a warrior, a dictator; now
Name the most worthy, and I'll follow him.

SCENE VII.

THE SENATE, CHIEF LICTOR.

CHIEF LICTOR.

My lord, I found this letter to Aurelia
From Nonnius: all our cares for her were vain.

CICERO.

[*Reading the letter.*

More dangers threatening! "Cæsar, who betrays us,
Would seize Præneste," ha!

[*Turning to Cæsar.*

Art thou too, Cæsar,
A vile accomplice? this completes our woes;
And wilt thou bend beneath a tyrant?—read it.

CÆSAR.

I have: I am a Roman, ruin comes
Upon us, danger is on every side;
'Tis well: I must be gone: you have my answer.

CATO.

It was a doubtful one: most certainly
He is their friend.

CICERO.

Away: let us defend
The state against them all: O Senators!
If Nonnius' death, if poor Aurelia's pangs,
If bleeding Rome, if a subverted world
Have power to stir up your resentment, rise,
Fly to the capitol, defend your gods,
Defend your country, punish Catiline.
I'll not reproach you; though 'twas most unkind,
To spurn at Cicero, and embrace a villain.
But to avoid a tyrant, name your chief:
You, who are friends to virtue, separate
From traitors.

[*The Senators separate themselves from Cethegus and Lentulus-Sura.*

Now let us unite, my friends,
Never let quarrels, jealousies, and strife,

Divide us; 'twas by them that Sulla triumphed.
For me, wherever danger calls, I go
Intrepid and inflexible: O gods!
Strengthen this arm, and animate this voice:
O grant me still to save ungrateful Rome!

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

CATO, *with part of the senate in arms.*

CLODIUS.

[*To Cato.*

What! whilst the senate armed for its own safety
From busy faction's power can scarce preserve
These sacred walls; thus shall a proud plebeian
Insult us? shall a people, born to freedom,
Be treated like dependent slaves? by him,
Shall Rome's best friends, the conquerors of the world,
Be put in chains? because he is a consul,
Shall he condemn his masters? Catiline's self
Were less despotic, and less dangerous:
With you I feel my country's wretchedness,
And weep her fate; but cannot, will not, see
The senate thus disgraced.

CATO.

Disgrace attends
On those alone who merit it—but know,
The blood of nobles, your patrician friends,
Debased by guilt, should rank below the meanest;
Those who betrayed us are condemned to death:

Cicero condemned them; he who saved your country,
The glorious consul, whom ye dare accuse,
Because he loved you but too well: yet fear
And tremble all, ungrateful as ye are
To join with traitors, for an equal fate
Shall soon o'erwhelm you; Catiline's at our gates.
What Cæsar hath determined yet we know not;
Whether he means to save, or to destroy
His country: Cicero bravely acts alone,
And hazards all for Rome, whilst you despise
Your best of friends, and treat him as a foe.

CLODIUS.

Cato has more severity than courage,
And ever rigorous, hates not guilt so much
As he loves punishment: reproach us not,
Nor act the censor when we want a friend.
Whilst the destructive flames of war surround,
'Tis not a consul's edict can defend us.
What can your lictor and his fasces do,
Against a band of fierce conspirators?
You talk of dangers, and of Cæsar's power:
Who does not know that Cæsar is the friend
Of Catiline? you have pointed out the ills
That threaten Rome; it were a nobler task
To show us how we may remove them.

CATO.

Yes;
And so I will: I would advise the senate
To be aware of Cæsar, and of—thee;
Nay, more—but see our father comes.

SCENE II.

CICERO, CATO, *part of the senate.*

CATO.

[*To Cicero.*
Behold
Great Cicero, the sons of thankless Rome:
Approach and save us; envy's self shall soon
Fall at thy feet, in humble admiration
Of such transcendent virtue.

CICERO.

Friends and Romans,
The love of glory is my ruling passion,
Fame is the fair reward of human toil,
And I would wish to merit it from you:
I have done little yet, perhaps hereafter
I may do more to serve my country: Rome
Was full of open and of secret foes;
Patricians, and plebeians, citizens
And soldiers, all in wild confusion, seemed
To thirst for blood: I saw the gathering storm
That threatened universal ruin; saw
The bold conspirators tumultuous rise,
And bear down all before them: at their head
Were Sura and Cethegus; them I seized,
And gave to justice; but the Hydra faction
Hath many heads which still successive rise,
And mock my labors: Catiline boldly pushed
To the Quirinal gate; by gallant deeds,
Almost incredible, he kept the field,
And forced a passage to his army; Rome
Beheld him with amazement; Antony

In vain opposing Sulla's hardy veterans,
Was baffled and subdued; Petreius strove
To succor him, but with unequal force
And fruitless valor: thus on every side,
Surrounded by calamities, great Rome,
The mistress of the world, is on the brink
Of ruin; Cicero trembles for her fate.

CRASSUS.

What part hath Cæsar taken?

CICERO.

He hath behaved
As Cæsar must, with most undaunted courage,
Yet not as Rome could wish a zealous friend
Would act in her defence. I saw him quell
The rebel foe; yet after that, stir up
Seditious spirits, and by every art
Of smooth insinuation, work himself
Into the people's hearts. Amidst this scene
Of blood, methought a secret joy o'erspread
His glowing cheek, whilst his all-soothing voice
Courted applause, inviting Rome to be
His slave hereafter.

CATO.

I was ever fearful
Of Cæsar's power; he is not to be trusted.

SCENE III.

THE SENATE, CÆSAR.

CÆSAR.

Well: am I still suspected in the senate?

Is Cato's stubborn virtue still my foe?
Of what does he accuse me?

CATO.

As a friend
To Catiline, the sworn enemy of Rome;
You have protected him, and leagued with those
It had become you better to chastise.

CÆSAR.

I would not stain my laurels with the blood
Of such vile miscreants: Cæsar fights with none
But warriors.

CATO.

What are these conspirators?

CÆSAR.

A dastard crowd, contemptible and vile:
They fled like slaves before me; but the soldiers
Of Sulla are a formidable band,
And boast an able chief; from them indeed
Rome hath some cause to fear; Petreius sinks
Beneath his wounds, and Catiline marches onward;
Our soldiers are alarmed: what says our consul?
And what has he resolved?

CICERO.

I'll tell thee, Cæsar:
Grant, heaven, we may succeed!—thou hast deserved
Suspicion, but I'll give thee the fair means
To clear thy honor, and avenge thy country.
I know thee well, thy virtues and thy frailty;
Know what thou canst, and what thou darest not do;
Know Cæsar would command, but not betray,
A noble friend, and a most dangerous foe:

Whilst I condemn I cannot but esteem thee.
Away: remember that the eyes of Rome,
And of the world, are on thee: go, support
Petreius, save the empire, and deserve
The love of Cato: we have men, but want
A general to conduct them; Cæsar best
Can lead them, and to him alone we trust
The safety and the glory of mankind.

CÆSAR.

Cicero on Cæsar safely may depend;
Farewell: I go to conquer or to die.

[*Exit.*

CATO.

You've touched him in the tenderest part; ambition
Will urge him on.

CICERO.

Great souls must ever thus
Be treated: I have bound him to the state
By this firm confidence; I know his valor
Will now support us: the ambitious still
Should be distinguished from the traitor; I
Shall make him virtuous if he is not so
Already. Courage, as directed, forms
The mighty hero, or the mighty villain;
And he who is renowned for guilt alone,
Had glory fired his breast, to him had been
The incense poured, to him the temple raised
For his exalted merit: Catiline's self,
By me conducted, had like Scipio shone:
Though many a Sulla is in Cæsar hid,
Yet doubt I not but Rome shall find in him
Her best support.

[*Turning to the chief of the Lictors, who enters armed.*

Well: these conspirators,
What have they done?

CHIEF LICTOR.

My lord, they met the fate
They merited, but other foes rise up,
Sprung from their blood; like Ætna's flames, that burst
From the parched entrails of the burning mount:
Another Hannibal, but far more dreadful,
Because amongst the guilty sons of Rome
He finds his traitorous friends, is at our gates.
A hundred voices roar for Catiline,
Condemn your laws, and curse your tardy senate;
Demand their ancient rights, and cry aloud
For vengeance on the consul.

CLODIUS.

Well indeed
They may, while Cicero tramples on the laws,
And spurns his equals thus; perhaps the senate——

CICERO.

Clodius, no more; restrain thy envious tongue,
Nor rashly blame the guiltless; my short power
Will soon be wrested from me; whilst it lasts
It shall not be controlled; you will have time
Enough to vex and persecute hereafter;
But whilst the state's in danger, Cicero claims
The tribute of respect: I know too well
This fickle world to hope for constancy
And candor from it; foul ingratitude
Is all that I expect; on false surmises
Great Scipio was accused; he thanked the gods,
And quitted Rome: I too will pay my vows
To gracious heaven, but will not leave you; no;

My days are all devoted to my country,
And all shall be expended in her service.

CATO.

Suppose I were to show myself in Rome,
Perhaps my presence might disperse the crowd,
And be a check on Cæsar, whom I own
I much suspect: if fortune frowns upon us——

CICERO.

We cannot do without you in the senate;
I've given my orders; Cæsar's in the field;
Thy great example may be useful here,
And Rome's expiring glory be restored
By Cato's virtue—but behold he comes,
And crowned with victory.

[*Cæsar enters; Cicero embraces him.*

Most noble Cæsar,
Hast thou preserved the state?—

CÆSAR.

I hope so: now
The consul will believe me—brave Petreius
Has gained immortal glory: here we fought,
Beneath this sacred rampart, in the sight
Of our domestic gods that fired each soul
With nobler rage: Metellus, and Murena,
With the brave Scipios showed in Rome's defence
The same exalted courage that subdued
Asia and Carthage; they have merited
Most nobly of their country: touching Cæsar
Let others speak: the desperate remains
Of Sulla's army seemed to brave their fate,
And in the agonies of death breathed forth
Their curses on us: midst the general slaughter,
The fiery Catiline long undaunted stood,

Fought through a host of circling foes, till spent
With ceaseless toil, and covered o'er with wounds,
Bravely he fell: I must admire the soldier,
Though I detest the rebel: once I loved him,
I own it; but let Cicero judge, if ever
To friendship Cæsar sacrificed his honor.

CICERO.

Cæsar is all that Cicero could desire,
All that he wished, and all he hoped to find him:
Go on, brave youth, preserve thy noble spirit,
And be thy country's friend; may heaven protect
And guard thee: never may thy generous soul
Be stained with vice, nor false ambition urge
Thy spotless youth to quit the paths of virtue!

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

PANDORA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS, a Son of Heaven and Earth, a Demi-God.

PANDORA.

JUPITER.

MERCURY.

NEMESIS.

NYMPHS.

TITANS.

CELESTIAL DEITIES.

INFERNAL DEITIES.

PANDORA.

ACT I.

The scene represents a fine country, with mountains at a distance.

SCENE I.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS OF NYMPHS, PANDORA.

[*At the farther end of the stage, lying down in an alcove.*

PROMETHEUS.

In vain, Pandora, do I call on thee,
My lovely work; alas! thou hearest me not,
All stranger as thou art to thy own charms,
And to Prometheus' love: the heart I formed
Is still insensible; thy eyes are void
Of motion; still the ruthless power of Jove
Denies thee life, and drives me to despair:
Whilst nature breathes around thee, and the birds
In tender notes express their passion, thou
Art still inanimate; death holds thee still
Beneath his cruel empire.

SCENE II.

PROMETHEUS, THE TITANS, ENCELADUS, TYPHON, ETC.

ENCELADUS AND TYPHON.

Child of Earth
And Heaven, thy cries have raised the forest; speak;
Who amongst the gods hath wronged Prometheus?

PROMETHEUS.

[*Pointing to Pandora.*

Jove
Is jealous of my work divine; he fears
That altars will be raised to my Pandora;
He cannot bear to see the earth adorned
With such a peerless object; he denies
To grant her life, and makes my woes eternal.

TYPHON.

That proud usurper Jove did ne'er create
Our nobler souls; life, and its sacred flame,
Come not from him.

ENCELADUS.

[*Pointing to his brother Typhon.*

We are the sons of Night
And Tartarus:
To thee, eternal night, we pray,
Thou wert long before the day;
Let then to Janarus Olympus yield.

TYPHON.

Let the unrelenting Jove
Join the jealous gods above;
Life and all its blessings flow
From hell, and from the gods below.

PROMETHEUS AND THE TWO TITANS.

Come from the centre, gods of night profound,
And animate her beauty; let your power
Assist our bold emprize!

PROMETHEUS.

Your voice is heard,
The day looks pale, and the astonished earth

Shakes from its deep foundations: Erebus
Appears before us.

[*The scene changing represents chaos; all the gods of hell come upon the stage.*]

CHORUS OF INFERNAL DEITIES.

Light is hateful to our eyes,
Jove and heaven we despise;
The guilty race, as yet unborn, must go
With us to hell's profoundest depths below.

NEMESIS.

The waves of Lethe, and the flames of hell,
Shall ravage all: speak, whom must Janarus
In its dark womb embrace?

PROMETHEUS.

I love the earth,
And would not hurt it: to that beauteous object
[*Pointing to Pandora*
Have I given birth; but Jove denies it power
To breathe, to think, to love, and to be happy.

THE THREE PARCÆ.

All our glory, and our joy,
Is to hurt, and to destroy;
Heaven alone can give it breath,
We can nought bestow but death.

PROMETHEUS.

Away then, ye destroyers, ye are not
The deities Prometheus shall adore;
Hence to your gloomy seats, ye hateful powers,
And leave the world in peace.

NEMESIS.

Tremble thou, for thou shalt prove
Soon the fatal power of love:
We will unchain the fiends of war,
And death's destructive gates unbar.

[*The infernal deities disappear, and the country resumes its verdure: the nymphs of the woods range themselves on each side of the stage.*]

PROMETHEUS.

[*To the Titans.*

Why would ye call forth from their dark abyss
The foes of nature, to obscure the light
Of these fair regions?
From hell Pandora never shall receive
That flame divine which only heaven should give.

ENCELADUS.

Since, good Prometheus, 'tis thy dear delight
To scatter blessings o'er this new abode,
Thou best deservest to be its master: haste
To yon blest regions, and snatch thence the flame
Celestial, form a soul, and be thyself
The great Creator.

PROMETHEUS.

Love's in heaven; he reigns
O'er all the gods: I'll throw his darts around,
And light up his fierce fires: he is my god,
And will assist Prometheus.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Fly to the immortal realms above,
And penetrate the throne of Jove;

The world to thee shall altars raise,
And millions celebrate thy praise.

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

The scene represents the same country; Pandora inanimate reclining in the alcove; a flaming chariot descends from heaven.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA, NYMPHS, TITANS, ETC.

A DRYAD.

Ye woodland nymphs, rise from your fair abode,
And sing the praises of the demi-god;
Who returns from above
In the chariot of love?

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Ye verdant lawns, and opening flowers,
Ye springs which lavish nature's powers;
Ye hills that bear the impending sky,
Put on your fairest forms to meet his eye.

PROMETHEUS.

[*Descending from the chariot, with a torch in his hand.*

Ravished from heaven I bring to happier earth
Love's sacred flame, more brilliant than the light
Of glittering day, and to Jove's boasted thunder
Superior.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Go, thou enlivening, animating soul,
Through nature's every work, pervade the whole;
To earth, to water, and to air impart,

Thy vivid power, and breathe o'er every heart.

PROMETHEUS.

[*Coming near to Pandora.*

And may this precious flame inspire thy frame
With life and motion! earth, assist my purpose!
Rise, beauteous object, love commands thee; haste,
Obey his voice; arise, and bless Prometheus!

[*Pandora rises, and comes forward.*

CHORUS.

She breathes, she lives; O love, how great thy power!

PANDORA.

Whence, and what am I? to what gracious powers
Owe I my life and being?

[*A symphony is heard at a distance.*

Hark! my ears
Are ravished with enchanting sounds; my eyes
With beauteous objects filled on every side:
What wonders hath my kind creator spread
Around me! O where is he? I have thought
And reason to enlighten me: O earth,
Thou art not my mother; some benignant god
Produced me: yes, I feel him in my heart.

[*She sits down by the side of a fountain.*

What do I see! myself, in this fair fountain,
That doth reflect the face of heaven? the more
I see this image, sure the more I ought
To thank the gods who made me.

NYMPHS AND TITANS.

[*Dancing round her.*

Fair Pandora,
Daughter of heaven, let thy charms inspire
An equal flame, and fan the mutual fire.

PANDORA.

What lovely object that way draws my eyes?
[*To Prometheus.*
Of all I see in these delightful mansions,
Nought pleases like thyself; 'twas thou alone
Who gavest me life, and I will live for thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Before those lovely eyes could see
Their author, they enchanted me;
Before that tongue could speak, Prometheus loved thee.

PANDORA.

Thou lovest me then, dear author of my life,
And my heart owns its master; for to thee
It flies with transport: have I said too much,
Or not enough?

PROMETHEUS.

O thou canst never say
Too much; thou speakest the language of pure love
And nature: thus may lovers always speak!

DUET.

God of my heart, eternal power,
Great love, enliven every hour;
Thy reign begins, and may thy transports prove
The reign of pleasure is the reign of love!

PROMETHEUS.

But hark! the thunder rolls; thick clouds of darkness,
As envious of the earth's new happiness,
Disturb our joys: what horrors throng around me!
Hark! the earth shakes, and angry lightnings pierce

The vault of heaven: what power thus moves the
world
From its foundations?

[*A car descends, on which are seated Mercury, Discord, Nemesis, etc.*]

MERCURY.

Some rash hand hath stolen
The sacred fire from heaven: to expiate
The dire offence, Pandora, thou must go
Before the high tribunal of the gods.

PROMETHEUS.

O cruel tyrant!

PANDORA.

Dread commands!

MERCURY.

Obey:
Thou must to heaven.

PANDORA.

I was in heaven already,
When I beheld the object of my love.

PROMETHEUS.

Have pity, cruel gods!

PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA.

Barbarians, stay.

MERCURY.

Haste, offenders, haste away,
Jove commands, you must obey:
Bear her, ye winds, to heaven's eternal mansions.

[*The car mounts and disappears.*

PROMETHEUS.

The cruel tyrants, jealous of my bliss,

Have torn her from me; she was the lovely work
Of my own hands: I have done more than Jove
Could ever do: Pandora's charming eyes,
Soon as they opened, told me that she loved:
Thou jealous god! but thou shalt feel my wrath,
And I will brave thy power: for know, usurper,
Less dreadful far will all thy thunders prove,
Than bold Prometheus fired by hopeless love.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

The scene represents the palace of Jupiter.

JUPITER, MERCURY.

JUPITER.

O Mercury, I've seen this lovely object,
Earth's fair production; heaven is in her eye,
The graces dwell around her, and my heart
Is sacrificed a victim to her charms.

MERCURY.

And she shall answer to thy love.

JUPITER.

O no:
Terror is mine, and power; I reign supreme
O'er earth, and hell, and heaven; but love alone
Can govern hearts: malicious, cruel fate,
When it divided this fair universe,
Bestowed the better part on mighty love.

MERCURY.

What fearest thou? fair Pandora scarce hath seen
The light of day; and thinkest thou that she loves?

JUPITER.

Love is a passion learned with ease; and what
Cannot Pandora do? she is a woman,
And handsome: but I will retire a moment,
Enchant her eyes, and captivate her heart:
Ye heavens! in vain, alas! ye shine, for nought
Have you so fair, so beauteous as Pandora.

[*He retires.*

PANDORA.

Scarce have these eyes beheld the light of day,
Scarce have they looked on him I loved, when lo!
'Tis all snatched from me; death, they say, will come
And take me soon: O I have felt him sure
Already: is not death the sudden loss
Of those we love? O give me back, ye gods,
To earth, to that delightful grove where first
I saw my kind creator, when at once
I breathed and loved: O envied happiness!

[*The gods, with their several attributes, come upon the stage.*]

CHORUS OF GODS.

Let heaven rejoice
At the glad voice
Of heaven's eternal king.

NEPTUNE.

Let the sea's bosom—

PLUTO.

And the depths of hell—

CHORUS OF GODS.

To distant worlds his endless praises tell.
Let heaven rejoice, etc.

PANDORA.

How all conspires to threaten and alarm me!
O how I hate and fear this dazzling splendor!
Another's merit how can I approve,
Or bear the praise of aught but him I love?

THE THREE GRACES.

Love's fair daughter, here remain,
Thou in right of him shalt reign;
Heaven thy chosen seat shall be,
Earth in vain shall wish for thee.

PANDORA.

All affrights me,
Nought delights me,
Alas! a desert had more charms for me.
Hence, ye idle visions; cease,
Discordant sounds,
[*A Symphony is heard.*
And give me peace.
[*Jupiter comes forth out of a cloud.*

JUPITER.

Thou art the best and fairest charm of nature,
Well worthy of eternity: from earth
Sprang thy weak body; but thy purer soul
Partakes of heaven's unalterable fire,
And thou wert born for gods alone: with Jove
Taste then the sweets of immortality.

PANDORA.

I scorn thy gift, and rather would be nothing,
From whence I sprang; thy immortality,
Without the lovely object I adore,
Is but eternal punishment.

JUPITER.

Fair creature,
Thou knowest not I am master of the thunder:
Canst thou in heaven look back to earth?

PANDORA.

That earth
Is my abode; there first I learned to love.

JUPITER.

'Twas but the shadow of it, in a world
Unworthy of that noble flame, which here
Alone can burn unquenchable.

PANDORA.

Great Jove,
Content with glory and with splendor, leave
To earthly lovers happiness and joy:
Thou art a god; O hear my humble prayer!
A gracious god should make his creatures happy.

JUPITER.

Thou shalt be happy, and in thee I hope
For bliss supreme: ye powerful pleasures, you
Who dwell around me, now exert your charms,
Deceive her lovely eyes, and win her heart.

[*The Pleasures dance around her and sing.*

CHORUS OF PLEASURES.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

A SINGLE VOICE.

Nought has earth but shadows vain,
Of pleasures followed close by pain;
Soon her winged transports fly,
Soon her roses fade and die.

CHORUS.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

SINGLE VOICE.

Here the brisk and sportive hours
Shall cull thee ever-blooming flowers;
Time has no wings, he cannot fly,
And love is joined to immortality.

CHORUS.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

PANDORA.

Ye tender pleasures, ye increase my flame,
And ye increase my pain: if happiness
Is yours to give, O bear it to my love.

JUPITER.

Is this the sad effect of all my care,
To make a rival happy?

[*Enter Mercury.*

MERCURY.

Assume thy lightnings, Jove, and blast thy foe;
Prometheus is in arms, the Titans rage,
And threaten heaven; mountain on mountain piled,
They scale the skies; already they approach.

JUPITER.

Jove has the power to punish; let them come.

PANDORA.

And wilt thou punish? thou, who art the cause
Of all his miseries; thou art a jealous tyrant:
Go on, and love me; I shall hate thee more;
Be that thy punishment.

JUPITER.

I must away:
Rive them, ye thunder-bolts.

PANDORA.

Have mercy, Jove!

JUPITER.

[*To Mercury.*

Conduct Pandora to a place of safety:
The happy world was wrapped in peace profound,
A beauty comes, and nought is seen but ruin.

[*He goes out.*

PANDORA.

[*Alone.*

O fatal charms! would I had ne'er been born!
Beauty and love, and every gift divine,
But make me wretched: if, all-powerful Love,
Thou didst create me, now relieve my sorrows;
Dry up my tears, bid war and slaughter cease,
And give to heaven and earth eternal peace.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

The scene represents the Titans armed, mountains at a distance, with giants throwing them on each other.

ENCELADUS.

Fear not, Prometheus, nature feels thy wrongs,
And joins with us in just revenge: behold
These pointed rocks, and shaggy mountains; soon
The jealous tyrants all shall sink beneath them.

PROMETHEUS.

Now, earth, defend thyself, and combat heaven:
Trumpets and drums, now shall ye first be heard:

March, Titans, follow me: the seat of gods
Is your reward; be fair Pandora mine.
[*They march to the sound of trumpets.*

CHORUS OF TITANS.

Arm, ye valiant Titans, arm,
Spread around the dread alarm:
Let proud immortals tremble on their thrones.

PROMETHEUS.

Their thunder answers to our trumpets' voice.
[*Thunder is heard; a car descends, bearing the gods towards the mountains: Pandora is seated near Jupiter; Prometheus speaks.*]
Jove gives the dreadful signal; haste, begin
The battle. [*The giants rise towards heaven.*

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Earth, and hell, and heaven confounded,
All with terrors are surrounded;
Cease, ye gods, and Titans, cease
Your cruel wars, and give us peace.

TITANS.

Yield, cruel tyrants.

GODS.

Rebels, fly.

TITANS.

Yield, heaven, to earth.

GODS.

Die, rebels, die.

PANDORA.

O heaven! O earth! ye Titans, and ye gods,
O cease your rage, all perish for Pandora:
I have made the world unhappy.

TITANS.

Draw
Your arrows now.

GODS.

Strike, thunders.

TITANS.

Hurl down heaven.

GODS.

Destroy the earth.

BOTH.

Yield, cruel tyrants—rebels fly—
Yield, earth, to heaven—die, rebels, die.

[*A dead silence for a time; a bright cloud descends; Destiny appears, seated in the middle of it.*]

DESTINY.

Cease, hostile powers, attend to me,
And hear the will of Destiny.

[*Silence ensues.*

PROMETHEUS.

Unalterable being, power supreme,
Speak thy irrevocable doom; attend,
Ye tyrants, and obey.

CHORUS.

Speak, the gods must yield to thee;
Speak, immortal Destiny.

DESTINY.

[*In the middle of the gods, who throng round him.*

Hear me, ye gods; another world this day
Brings forth: meantime let every gift adorn

Pandora; and you, Titans, who 'gainst heaven
Have raised rebellious war, receive your doom,
Beneath these mountains sunk forever groan.

[*The rocks fall upon them; the chariot of the gods descends to earth; Pandora is restored to Prometheus.*

JUPITER.

O fate, my empire yields to thee,
Jove submits to destiny:
Thou art obeyed; but from this hour let earth
And heaven be disunited: Nemesis,
Come forth.

[*Nemesis advances from the bottom of the stage, and Jupiter proceeds.*

Nemesis, thy aid impart,
Pierce the cruel beauty's heart;
My vengeance let Pandora know,
In the gifts that I bestow:
Let heaven and earth henceforth be disunited.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V.

The scene represents a grove, with the ruins of rocks scattered about it.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA.

PANDORA.

[*Holding a box in her hand.*

And wilt thou leave me then? art thou subdued,
Or art thou conqueror?

PROMETHEUS.

Victory is mine:
If yet thou lovest me, love and destiny
Speak for Prometheus.

PANDORA.

Wilt thou leave me then?

PROMETHEUS.

The Titans are subdued: lament their fate:
I must assist them; let us teach mankind
To succor the unhappy.

PANDORA.

Stay a moment:
Behold thy victory: let us open this,
It was the gift of Jove.

PROMETHEUS.

What wouldst thou do?
A rival's gift is dangerous; 'tis some snare
The gods have laid.

PANDORA.

Thou canst not think it.

PROMETHEUS.

Hear
What I request of thee, and stay at least
Till I return.

PANDORA.

Thou biddest, and I obey:
I swear by love still to believe Prometheus.

PROMETHEUS.

Wilt thou then promise?

PANDORA.

By thyself I swear:
All are obedient where they love.

PROMETHEUS.

Enough:
I'm satisfied: and now, ye woodland nymphs,
Begin your songs; sing earth restored to bliss;
Let all be gay, for all was made for her.

FIRST NYMPH.

Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, of innocence, and love;
And, like thy parent Nature, be immortal.

SECOND NYMPH.

No longer now shall earth affrighted mourn,
By cruel war her tender bosom torn:
Pleasures now on pleasures flow,
Happiness succeeds to woe:
The flowers their fragrant odors yield;
Who would wither the fair field?
The blest creation teems with mirth and joy,
And nature's work what tyrant would destroy?

THE CHORUS.

[*Repeats.*

Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, etc.

FIRST NYMPH.

See! to Pandora Mercury appears,
And ratifies great Nature's kind decree.
[*The nymphs retire: Pandora advances with Nemesis, under the figure of Mercury.*]

NEMESIS.

Already I have told thee, base Prometheus
Is jealous of thee, and exerts his power
Like a harsh tyrant.

PANDORA.

O he is my lord,
My king, my god, my lover, and my husband.

NEMESIS.

Why then forbid thee to behold the gift
Of generous heaven?

PANDORA.

His fearful love's alarmed,
And I would wish to have no will but his.

NEMESIS.

He asks too much, Pandora, nor hath done
What thou deservest: he might have given thee beauties
Which now thou hast not.

PANDORA.

He hath formed my heart
Tender and kind; he charms and he adores me;
What could he more?

NEMESIS.

Thy charms will perish.

PANDORA.

Ha!
Thou makest me tremble.

NEMESIS.

This mysterious box
Will make thy charms immortal; thou wilt be

Forever beauteous, and forever happy:
Thy husband shall be subject to thy power,
And thou shalt reign unrivalled in his love.

PANDORA.

He is my only lord, and I would wish
To be immortal, but for my Prometheus.

NEMESIS.

Fain would I open thy fair eyes, and bless thee
With every good; would make thee please forever.

PANDORA.

But dost thou not abuse my innocence?
And canst thou be so cruel?

NEMESIS.

Who would hurt
Such beauty?

PANDORA.

I should die with grief, if e'er
I disobliged the sovereign of my heart.

NEMESIS.

O in the name of Nature, in the name
Of thy dear husband, listen to my voice!

PANDORA.

That name has conquered, and I will believe thee.
[*She opens the box; darkness is spread over the stage, and a voice heard from below.*]
Ha! what thick cloud thus o'er my senses spreads
Its fatal darkness? thou deceitful god!
O I am guilty, and I suffer for it.

NEMESIS.

I must away: Jove is revenged, and now
I will return to hell.

[*Nemesis vanishes: Pandora faints away on the grass.*]

PROMETHEUS.

[*Advancing from the farther end of the stage.*

O fatal absence! dreadful change! what star
Of evil influence thus deforms the face
Of Nature? where's my dear Pandora? why
Answers she not to my complaining voice?
O my Pandora! but behold, from hell
Let loose, the monsters rise, and rush upon us.

[*Furies and demons running on the stage.*

FURIES.

The time is come when we shall reign:
Fear and grief, remorse and pain,
From this great decisive hour,
O'er the world shall spread their power;
Death shall come, a bitter draught,
By the Furies hither brought.

PROMETHEUS.

That cruel guest shall powers infernal bring?
And must the earth lose her eternal spring?
To time, and dire disease, and horrid vice,
Shall mortals fall a helpless sacrifice?
The nymphs lament our fate: Pandora, hear
And answer to my griefs! she comes, but seems
Insensible.

PANDORA.

I am not worthy of thee:
I have destroyed mankind, deceived my husband,

And am alone the guilty cause of all:
Strike: I deserve it.

PROMETHEUS.

Can I punish thee?

PANDORA.

Strike, and deprive me of that wretched life
Thou didst bestow.

CHORUS OF NYMPHS.

Tenderest lover, dry her tears,
She is full of lover's fears;
She is woman, therefore frail,
Let her beauty then prevail.

PROMETHEUS.

Hast thou then, spite of all thy solemn vows,
Opened the fatal box?

PANDORA.

Some cruel god
Betrayed me: fatal curiosity!
The work was thine: O every evil sprung
From that accursed gift: undone Pandora!

LOVE.

[*Descending from heaven.*

Love still remains, and every good is thine:
[*Scene changes, and represents the palace of love.*]
[*Love proceeds.*

For thee will I resist the power of fate;
I gave to mortals being, and they ne'er
Shall be unhappy whilst they worship me.

PANDORA.

Soul of my soul, thou comforter divine,
O punish Jove; inspire his vengeful heart
With double passion for the blessed Pandora.

PROMETHEUS and PANDORA.

Heaven shall pierce our hearts in vain
With every grief, and every pain;
With thee no pains torment, no pleasures cloy;
With thee to suffer is but to enjoy.

LOVE.

Lovely hope, on mortals wait;
Come, and gild their wretched state;
All thy flattering joys impart.
Haste, and live in every heart;
Howe'er deceitful thou mayest be,
Thou canst grant felicity,
And make them happy in futurity.

PANDORA.

Fate would make us wretched here,
But hope shall dry up every tear;
In sorrow he shall give us rest,
And make us even in anguish blest:
Love shall preserve us from the paths of vice,
And strew his flowers around the precipice.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

"O STAY, HORTENSIA; CAN YOU FLY ME,
CAN YOU AVOID ME?"

TATLER

"O STAY, HORTENSIA, CAN YOU FLY ME
CAN YOU AVOID ME?"
TATLER

THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

VOLTAIRE

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THE SCOTCH WOMAN

Represented at Paris in 1760.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Mr. Fabrice, master of a Coffee-house.
Miss Lindon, a Scotchwoman.
Lord Montross, a Scotchman.
Lord Murray.
Polly, maid to Miss Lindon.
Freeport, a Merchant of London.
Wasp, a Writer.
Lady Alton.
Several English Gentlemen frequenting the Coffee-house, Servants, Messengers, &c.

SCENE LONDON.

Voltaire dashed off this comedy in eight days, to ridicule Fréron, who had unfavorably criticised *Candide*. It was first published as by Hume, or Home, author of the tragedy *"Douglas."*

THE SCOTCH WOMAN.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The scene represents a coffee-house, with apartments on the same floor on each side communicating with it.

WASP.

[*At one corner of the room reading the papers. Coffee, pen and ink, etc., on the table before him.*]

A plague on this vile news! here are places and pensions given to above twenty people, and nothing for me! a present of a hundred guineas to a subaltern for doing his duty! a great merit indeed! so much to the inventor of a machine to lessen the number of hands; so much to a pilot; so much settled on men of letters, but nothing for me! here's another pension, and another—but the deuce a farthing for Wasp [*he throws down the paper and walks about*] and yet I have done the state some service; I have written more than any one man in England; I have raised the price of paper; and yet nothing is done for me: but I will be revenged on all those whom the world calls men of merit: I have got something already by speaking ill of others; and if I can but contrive to do them a real mischief, my fortune is made. I have praised fools, and calumniated every good quality and perfection of human nature, and yet can scarce live by it: in short, to be a great man, you must not be content with slander and destruction, but endeavor to be

really hurtful. [*To the master of the coffee-house.*] Good morrow to you, Mr. Fabrice. Well, Mr. Fabrice, everybody's affairs, I find, go well but mine; it is intolerable.

FABRICE.

Indeed, indeed, Mr. Wasp, you make yourself a great many enemies.

WASP.

I believe I excite a little envy.

FABRICE.

On my soul I believe not; but rather a passion of a very different kind: to be free, for I have really a friendship for you, I am extremely concerned to hear people talk of you as they do: how do you contrive to be so universally hated?

WASP.

It is because I have merit, Mr. Fabrice.

FABRICE.

That may possibly be; but you are the only person who ever told me so: they say you are a very ignorant fellow: but that is nothing; they say, moreover, that you are ill-natured and malicious; that gives me concern, as it must every honest man.

WASP.

I assure you I have a good and tender heart. I do indeed now and then speak a little freely of the men; but for the women, Mr. Fabrice, I love them all, provided they are handsome. As a proof of it, I must absolutely insist on your introducing me to your amiable lodger, whom I have never yet been able to converse with.

FABRICE.

Upon honor, Mr. Wasp, that young lady will never do for you; for she never praises herself, or speaks ill of anybody else.

WASP.

She speaks ill of nobody, because, I suppose, she knows nobody: are you not in love with her, Fabrice?

FABRICE.

Not I indeed, sir; she has something in her air so noble, that I dare not think of it—besides, her virtue—

WASP.

[*Laughing.*

Ha! ha! ha! her virtue indeed!

FABRICE.

Why so merry, sir? think you there is no such thing as virtue?—but I hear a coach at the door, and yonder is a livery servant with a portmanteau in his hand; some lord coming to lodge with me, perhaps.

WASP.

Be sure, my dear friend, you recommend me to him as soon as possible.

SCENE II.

LORD MONTROSS, FABRICE, WASP.

MONTROSS.

You, sir, I suppose, are Mr. Fabrice.

FABRICE.

At your service, sir.

MONTROSS.

I shall stay here only a few days. (Protect me, heaven, unhappy as I am!) I am recommended to you, sir, as a worthy honest man.

FABRICE.

So, sir, we ought all to be. You will here, sir, I believe, meet with all the conveniences of life; a tolerably good apartment, and my own table, if you choose to do me the honor to dine at it, and the amusement of coffee-house conversation.

MONTROSS.

Have you many boarders with you at present?

FABRICE.

Only one young lady, sir, very handsome and extremely virtuous.

WASP.

O mighty virtuous, ha! ha!

FABRICE.

Who lives quite retired.

MONTROSS.

Beauty and youth are not for me. Let me have an apartment, sir, if possible, entirely to myself. (What do I feel!) Have you any remarkable news in London?

FABRICE.

This gentleman, sir, can inform you: he talks and writes more than any one man in England, and is extremely useful to foreigners.

MONTROSS.

[*Walking about.*

I have other business.

FABRICE.

I'll step out, sir, and get things ready for you.

[*Exit.*

WASP.

[*Aside.*

This gentleman, I suppose, is just arrived in England: he must be some great man, for he seems to care for nobody. [*Turning to Montross.*] Permit me, my lord, to present to your lordship my respects; my pen and self, my lord, are at your lordship's service.

MONTROSS.

I am no lord, sir: to boast of a title, if we have one, is the part of a fool; and to assume one when we have no right, that of a knave. I am what I am; but pray, sir, what may be your employment in this house?

WASP.

I don't belong to the house, sir; but I spend most of my time in the coffee-room; write news, politics, and so forth, and am always ready to do an honest gentleman service. If you have any friend you want to have praised, or any enemy to be abused; any author you want to protect or to decry; 'tis but one guinea *per* paragraph: if you are desirous of cultivating any acquaintance for profit or pleasure, sir, I am your man.

MONTROSS.

And have you no other business, friend?

WASP.

O sir, it is a very good one, I assure you.

MONTROSS.

And have you never been shown in public with a pretty iron collar about your neck?

WASP.

This fellow has no notion of literature.

SCENE III.

WASP.

[*Sitting down to the table*] *several people walking about the coffee-house; Montross comes forward.*

MONTROSS.

Will my misfortunes never have an end? proscribed, banished, condemned to lose my head in Scotland; in my dear native country: I have lost my honors, my wife, my son, my whole family; except one unhappy daughter, like myself a miserable wanderer, perhaps dishonored; and must I die without taking revenge on Murray's barbarous family? I am razed out of the book of life; I am no more; even my name is wrested from me by that cruel decree: I am but a poor departed ghost, that hovers round its tomb.

[*One of the gentlemen in the coffee-house slapping Wasp on the shoulder.*

Well! you saw the new piece yesterday, it met with great applause; the author is a young fellow of merit, but has no fortune, the public ought to encourage him.

ANOTHER.

Rot the new piece; public affairs are strangely carried on; stocks rise; the nation's rich, and I'm ruined, absolutely undone.

WASP.

[*Writing.*

The piece is good for nothing; the author's a fool, and so are all those that support him: public affairs are in a wretched condition: the nation's ruined: I shall prove it in my pamphlet.

ANOTHER GENTLEMAN.

Your pamphlet's nonsense: philosophy is the most dangerous thing in the world; it was that which lost us the island of Minorca.

MONTROSS.

[*At a distance from them.*

Lord Murray's son shall pay dearly for it. O that before I die I could avenge the father's injuries in the son's blood!

A GENTLEMAN.

I thought the comedy last night was an excellent one.

WASP.

Detestable: our taste grows worse and worse.

ANOTHER GENTLEMAN.

Not so bad as your criticisms.

ANOTHER.

Philosophers sink the public funds: we must send another ambassador to Porte.

WASP.

We should always hiss a successful piece, for fear anything good should appear.

[*Four of them talk at once.*

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

If there was nothing good, you would lose all the pleasure of satirizing it: now I think the fifth act has great beauties.

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

I can't sell any of my goods.

THIRD GENTLEMAN.

I am in pain for Jamaica this year: depend on't, these philosophers will make us lose it.

WASP.

The fourth and fifth acts are both contemptible.

MONTROSS.

What a riot is here.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

It is impossible the government can exist as it is.

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

If the price of Barbadoes water is not lowered, the nation's undone.

MONTROSS.

How happens it, that in every country when men meet they all talk together, though they are certain of not being heard or attended to!

ENTER FABRICE.

[*A napkin in his hand.*

Dinner's on the table, gentlemen; but pray, let us have no disputes there, if you mean to dine with

me any more. Sir, [*Turning to Montross.*] shall we have the honor of your company?

MONTROSS.

What, with this tribe? no, friend, let me have something in my own room. Hark'ee, sir, [*Whispering to him.*] Is my Lord Falbridge in London?

FABRICE.

No, sir, but I believe he will be here soon.

MONTROSS.

Does he come to your house sometimes? I think I have heard so.

FABRICE.

He has done me that honor.—

MONTROSS.

Very well. Good morrow to you.—How hateful is life to me!

[*Exit.*

FABRICE.

This man seems lost in grief and thought; I should not be surprised to hear he had made away with himself; 'twould concern me, for he has the appearance of a worthy gentleman.

[*The gentlemen leave the coffee-house, and go to dinner: Wasp continues at the table writing: Fabrice knocks at Mrs. Lindon's door.*

SCENE IV.

FABRICE, POLLY, WASP.

FABRICE.

Mrs. Polly, Mrs. Polly.

POLLY.

Who's there, my landlord?

FABRICE.

Will you be so obliging as to favor us with your company to dinner?

POLLY.

I dare not, my mistress eats nothing. How indeed should we eat! we have too much grief.

FABRICE.

O it will give you spirits, and make you cheerful.

POLLY.

I can't be cheerful: when my mistress suffers, I must suffer with her.

FABRICE.

Then I'll send you up something privately.

[*Exit.*

WASP.

[*Rising from the table.*

I'll follow you, Mr. Fabrice—well, and so, my dear Polly, you will not introduce me to your mistress—still inflexible?

POLLY.

'Tis a fine thing for you to pretend to make love to a woman of her condition.

WASP.

Pray what is her condition?

POLLY.

A respectable one, I assure you, sir. I should think a servant was good enough for you.

WASP.

That is to say, if I were to court you, you would be thankful.

POLLY.

Not I, indeed.

WASP.

And what, pray, is the reason why your mistress positively refuses to see me, and her waiting-maid treats me so contemptuously?

POLLY.

We have three reasons for it. First, you are a wit; secondly, you are very tiresome; and thirdly, you are a wicked fellow.

WASP.

And what right has your mistress, pray, who is kept here on charity, to despise me?

POLLY.

Upon charity? who told you so, sir? my mistress, sir, is very rich: if she is not expensive, it is because she hates pomp: she is plainly clad, out of modesty, and eats little, because temperance is prescribed to her: in short, sir, you are very impertinent.

WASP.

Don't let her give herself so many airs; we know her conduct, her birth, and her adventures.

POLLY.

You, sir, who told them you? what do you know?

WASP.

O, I have correspondents in every part of the world.

POLLY.

[*Aside.*

O heaven! this man will ruin us.

[*Turning to him.*

Mr. Wasp, my dear Mr. Wasp, if you know anything, don't betray us.

WASP.

O ho! there is something then, and now I am dear Mr. Wasp: well, well, I shall say nothing, but you must——

POLLY.

What?

WASP.

You must love me.

POLLY.

Fie, fie, sir, that's impossible.

WASP.

Either love or fear me. You know there is something—

POLLY.

There is nothing, sir, but that my mistress is as respectable as you are hateful. We are truly easy. We fear nothing, and only laugh at you.

WASP.

They are very easy: from that I conclude they are almost starved: they fear nothing, that is to say, they are afraid of being discovered—I shall get to the bottom of it by and by, or—I shall not. I'll be revenged on them for their insolence. Despise me!

SCENE V.

MISS LINDON [*Coming out of her chamber dressed very plainly.*

MISS LINDON, POLLY.

MISS LINDON.

O my dear Polly, you have been with that vile fellow, Wasp; he always makes me uneasy; a destestable character, whose pen, words, and actions are all equally abominable: they tell me he works himself into families to bring in misery where there is none, and to increase it where it is: I had left this house because he frequents it, long since, but for the honesty and good heart of our landlord.

POLLY.

He absolutely insisted on seeing you, and I would not let him.

MISS LINDON.

To see me! where is my Lord Murray, he has not been here these two days!

POLLY.

True, madam, but because he does not come, are we never to dine?

MISS LINDON.

Remember, Polly, to conceal my misery from him, and from all the world: I am content to live on bread and water: poverty is not intolerable, but contempt is: I am satisfied to be in want, but I would not have it known I am so.

POLLY.

Alas! my dear mistress, whoever looks at me will easily perceive it: with you it is a different thing; your nobleness of soul supports you, you seem to rejoice in calamities, and only look the handsomer for it: but I grow thinner and thinner, you may see me fall away every minute; I am so altered within this last year that I scarcely know myself.

MISS LINDON.

We must not part with our courage nor our hopes: I can support my own poverty, but yours indeed affects me. My dear girl, let the labor of my hands relieve you, we will have no obligations to anybody. Go and sell this embroidery which I have done lately. I think I succeed pretty well in this kind of work. You have assisted me, and in return my hands shall feed and clothe you: It is noble to owe our subsistence to nothing but our virtue.

POLLY.

Let me kiss, let me bathe with my tears the dear hands that have labored in my service. O! I had rather die with my dear mistress in poverty, than be servant to a queen. Would I could administer some comfort to you!

MISS LINDON.

Alas! Lord Murray is not come: he whom I ought to hate, the son of him who was the author of

all my misfortunes: alas! the name of Murray will be forever fatal to me: if he comes, as he certainly will, let him not know my country, my condition, or my misfortunes.

POLLY.

Do you know, that villain, Wasp, pretends to be well acquainted with him?

MISS LINDON.

How is it possible he should know anything of him, when even you are scarcely acquainted with him? Nobody writes to me, I am locked up in my chamber as closely as if I were in my grave: he only pretends to know something in order to make himself necessary: take care he does not so much as find out the place of my birth. You know, my dear Polly, I am an unfortunate woman whose father was banished in the late troubles, and whose family is ruined: my father is wandering from desert to desert in Scotland. I should have left London to join him in his misfortunes, but that I have still some hopes in Lord Falbridge; he was my father's friend: our true friends never desert us. He has returned from Spain, and is now at Windsor: I wait but to see him: but alas! Murray comes not. I have opened my heart to thee, remember the most fatal blow thou canst give to it would be the disclosure of my condition.

POLLY.

To whom should I disclose it; I never go from you; besides that, the world is very indifferent about the poor and unfortunate.

MISS LINDON.

The world is indifferent, Polly, in this respect;

but still it is always inquisitive, and loves to tear open the wounds of the wretched: besides that, the men assume a right over our sex when they are unhappy, and abuse their power. I would make even my miseries respectable: but alas! Lord Murray will not come.

SCENE VI.

MISS LINDON, POLLY, FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Forgive me, madam, I am not acquainted with your name or quality; but I have, I know not why, the greatest respect for you. I have left the company below to wait on you, and know your commands.

MISS LINDON.

The regard which you express for me, my dear sir, deserves my most grateful acknowledgments: but what are your commands with me?

FABRICE.

I came, madam, only to know yours: you had no dinner yesterday.

MISS LINDON.

I was sick, sir, and could not eat.

FABRICE.

You are worse than sick, madam, you are melancholy: you will pardon me, but I cannot help thinking your fortune is not equal to your person and appearance.

MISS LINDON.

Why should you think so? I never complained of my fortune.

FABRICE.

Notwithstanding that, madam, I am sure it is not what you could wish it were.

MISS LINDON.

What say you?

FABRICE.

I say, madam, that the world you seem to shun, admires and pities you. I am but a plain man, madam, but I can see all your merit as well as the finest courtier. Let me entreat you, my dear lady, to take a little refreshment: there is above stairs an elderly gentleman who would be glad to eat with you.

MISS LINDON.

What, sit down to table with a stranger!

FABRICE.

The gentleman, I am sure, would be agreeable to you: you seem afflicted, and so does he. The communication of your grief might, perhaps, give mutual consolation.

MISS LINDON.

I cannot, will not, see anybody.

FABRICE.

At least, madam, permit my wife to pay her respects to you, and keep you company: permit her—

MISS LINDON.

I return you thanks, sir, but I want nothing.

FABRICE.

You will pardon me, madam, but I cannot think you want nothing, when you stand in need even of common necessaries.

MISS LINDON.

Who could make you believe so? indeed, sir, you are imposed upon.

FABRICE.

You will forgive me, madam.

MISS LINDON.

O Polly, 'tis two o'clock, and Lord Murray not come yet!

FABRICE.

That lord you speak of, madam, is one of the best of men; you never received him here but before company. Why would not you permit me to furnish out a little repast for you both? he is, perhaps, a relative of yours.

MISS LINDON.

My dear sir, you are mistaken.

FABRICE.

[*Pulling Polly by the sleeve.*

Go, child, there is a good dinner for you in the next room. This woman is incomprehensible: but who is yonder lady in the coffee-room with a masculine air? I should have taken her for a man: how wildly she looks!

POLLY.

O my dear mistress! 'tis Lady Alton, who wanted to marry my lord—I remember I saw her once before this way: 'tis certainly she.

MISS LINDON.

And my lord not come! then I am undone. Why am I still condemned to live?

[*She goes in.*

SCENE VII.

LADY ALTON.

[*Walking across the stage in a violent passion, and taking Fabrice by the arm.*

Follow me, sir, I must talk with you.

FABRICE.

With me, madam?

LADY ALTON.

With you, wretch.

FABRICE.

What a devil of a woman!

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

LADY ALTON, FABRICE.

LADY ALTON.

I don't believe a word you say, Mr. Coffeeman; you will absolutely drive me out of my senses.

FABRICE.

Then pray, madam, get into them again.

LADY ALTON.

You have the impudence to affirm to me, that this fortune-hunter here is a woman of honor, though she has received visits from a nobleman. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

FABRICE.

Why so, madam? when my lord came, he never came in privately; she received him publicly, the doors of her apartment were open, and my wife present. You may despise my condition, madam, but you should respect my honesty; and as to the lady you are pleased to call a fortune-hunter, if you knew her, you would esteem her.

LADY ALTON.

Leave me, sir, you grow impertinent.

FABRICE.

What a woman!

LADY ALTON.

[*Goes to Miss Lindon's door, and knocks rudely.*

Open the door.

SCENE II.

MISS LINDON, LADY ALTON.

MISS LINDON.

Who knocks so? what do you want, madam?

LADY ALTON.

Answer me, madam. Does not Lord Murray come here sometimes?

MISS LINDON.

What's that to you? what right have you to ask me? am I a criminal, and you my judge?

LADY ALTON.

I am your accuser. If my lord still visits you, if you encourage that wretch's passion, tremble: renounce him, or you are undone.

MISS LINDON.

If I had a passion for him, your menaces, madam, would but increase it.

LADY ALTON.

I see you love him; that the perfidious villain has seduced you; he has deceived you, and you brave me: but know, there is no vengeance which I am not capable of executing.

MISS LINDON.

Then, madam, know, I do love him.

LADY ALTON.

Before I revenge myself I will astonish you. There, know the traitor, look at these letters he wrote to me: there is his picture too which he gave me; but let me have it back, or—

MISS LINDON.

[*Giving her back the picture.*

What have I seen? unhappy woman! madam—

LADY ALTON.

Well.

MISS LINDON.

I no longer love him.

LADY ALTON.

Keep your resolution and your promise; know, he is inconstant, cruel, proud, the worst of characters.

MISS LINDON.

Stop, madam; if you continue to speak ill of him, I may relapse, and love him again. You are come here on purpose to take away my wretched life: that, madam, will easily be done.—Polly, 'tis all over; come and assist me to conceal this last and worst of all my miseries.

POLLY.

What is the matter, my dear mistress, where is your courage?

MISS LINDON.

Against misfortune, injustice, and poverty, there are arms that will defend a noble heart; but there is an arrow that always must be fatal.

[*They go out.*

SCENE III.

LADY ALTON, WASP.

LADY ALTON.

To be betrayed, abandoned for this worthless little wretch.

[*To Wasp.*

You, news-writer, have you done what I ordered you? have you employed your engines of intelligence, and found out who this insolent creature is that makes me so completely miserable?

WASP.

I have fulfilled your ladyship's commands, and have discovered that she is a Scotchwoman, and hides herself from the world.

LADY ALTON.

Prodigious news indeed!

WASP.

I can find out nothing else at present.

LADY ALTON.

What service then have you been of?

WASP.

When we discover a little, we add a little; and one little joined to another, makes a great deal. There's a hypothesis for you.

LADY ALTON.

How, pedant, a hypothesis!

WASP.

Yes, I suppose she is an enemy to the government.

LADY ALTON.

Certainly, nothing can be worse inclined; for she has robbed me of my lover.

WASP.

You plainly see, therefore, that in troublesome times, a Scotchwoman, who conceals herself, must be an enemy to the state.

LADY ALTON.

I can't say I see it altogether so clearly, but I heartily wish it were so.

WASP.

I would not lay a wager about it, but I'd swear to it.

LADY ALTON.

And would you venture to affirm this before people of consequence?

WASP.

I have the honor of being related to many persons of the first fashion. I am intimate with the mistress of a valet de chambre to the first secretary of the prime minister: I could even talk with the lackeys of your lover, Lord Murray, and tell them that the father of this young girl has sent her up to London, as a woman ill disposed. Now observe, this might have its consequences, and your rival, for her bad intentions, might be sent to the same prison where I have so often been for my writings.

LADY ALTON.

Good, very good: violent passions must be served by people who have no scruples about them. Let the vessel go with a full sail, or let it go to the bottom. You are certainly right; a Scotchwoman who conceals herself at a time when all the people of her country are suspected, must certainly be an enemy to the state. You are no fool, as you have been represented to me. I thought you had been only a smatterer on paper, but I see you have genius. I have already done something for you; I will do a great deal more. You must let me know everything that passes here.

WASP.

Let me advise you, madam, to make use of everything you know, and of everything you do not know.

Truth stands in need of some ornament: downright lies indeed may be vile things, but fiction is beautiful. What after all is truth? a conformity with our own ideas; what one says is always conformable to the idea one has whilst one is talking; therefore, properly speaking, there is no such thing as a lie.

LADY ALTON.

You seem to be an excellent logician, I fancy you studied at St. Omer's. But go, only tell me whatever you discover, I ask no more of you.

SCENE IV.

LADY ALTON, FABRICE.

LADY ALTON.

This is certainly one of the vilest and most impudent scoundrels; dogs bite from an instinct of courage, and this fellow from an instinct of meanness. Methinks, now I am a little cool, his behavior makes me out of love with revenge. I could almost take my rival's part against him. She has in her low condition a pride that pleases me; she is decent, and I am told, sensible: but she has robbed me of my lover, and that I can never pardon. [*To Fabrice, whom she sees in the coffee-room.*] Honest man, your servant, you are a good kind of fellow, but you have got a sad rascal in your house.

FABRICE.

I have heard, madam, from many, that he is as wicked as Miss Lindon is virtuous and amiable.

LADY ALTON.

Amiable! that wounds my heart.

SCENE V.

FABRICE, MR. FREEPORT.

[*Dressed plainly, with a large hat.*

FABRICE.

Heaven be praised, Mr. Freeport, I see you safe returned; how are you since your voyage to Jamaica?

FREEPORT.

Pretty well, I thank you, Mr. Fabrice, I have been very successful, but am much fatigued. [*To the waiter.*] Boy, some chocolate and the papers—one finds it more difficult to amuse oneself than to get rich.

FABRICE.

Will you have Wasp's papers?

FREEPORT.

No: what should I do with such stuff? It is no concern of mine if a spider in the corner of a wall walks over his web to suck the blood of flies. Give me the *Gazette!* What public news have you?

FABRICE.

None at present.

FREEPORT.

So much the better; the less news the less folly. But how go your affairs, my friend? have you a good deal of business? who lodges with you now?

FABRICE.

This morning an old gentleman came who won't see anybody.

FREEPORT.

He's in the right of it: three parts of the world are good for nothing, either knaves or fools, and as for the fourth, they keep to themselves.

FABRICE.

This gentleman has not so much as the curiosity to see a charming young lady who is in the same house with him.

FREEPORT.

There he's wrong. Who is she, pray?

FABRICE.

She is something more singular even than himself: she has now been with me these four months, and has never stirred out of her apartment: she calls herself Lindon, but I believe that is not her real name.

FREEPORT.

I make no doubt but she's a woman of virtue, or she would not lodge with you.

FABRICE.

O she is more than you can conceive; beautiful to the last degree, greatly distressed, and the best of women. Between you and me she is excessively poor, but of a high spirit and very proud.

FREEPORT.

If that be the case she is more to blame even than your old gentleman.

FABRICE.

By no means: her pride is an additional virtue. She denies herself common necessaries, and at the

same time would let nobody know she does: works with her own hands to get money to pay me; never complains, but hides her tears: it is with the utmost difficulty I can persuade her to expend a little of her money, due for rent, on things she really wants; and am forced to make use of a thousand arts before she will suffer me to assist her. I always reckon what she has at half the price it cost me, and when she finds it out, there is always a quarrel between us, which indeed is the only quarrel we have ever had: in short, sir, she is a miracle of virtue, misfortune, and intrepidity: she frequently draws from me tears of tenderness and admiration.

FREEPORT.

You are naturally tender; I am not. I admire none, though I esteem many: but I will see this woman; I am a little melancholy, and she may divert me.

FABRICE.

O sir, she scarcely ever receives any visitors. There is a lord indeed who comes now and then to see her, but she will never speak to him unless before my wife. He has not been here for some time, and now she lives more retired than ever.

FREEPORT.

I love retirement too, and hate a crowd as much as she can: I must see her, where is her apartment?

FABRICE.

Yonder: even with the coffee-room.

FREEPORT.

I'll go in.

FABRICE.

You must not.

FREEPORT.

I say I must: why not go into her chamber? bring in my chocolate and the papers. [*Pulls out his watch.*] I have not much time to lose, for I am engaged at two.

SCENE VI.

MISS LINDON, [*frightened, Polly following her.*]

FREEPORT, FABRICE.

MISS LINDON.

My God! who is this? sir, you are extremely rude; I think you might have shown more respect to my sex than thus to intrude on my retirement.

FREEPORT.

You will pardon me, madam, [*To Fabrice*] bring me the chocolate.

FABRICE.

Yes, sir, with the lady's consent.

FREEPORT.

[*Seats himself near a table, reads the newspaper, and looks up to Miss Lindon and Polly, takes off his hat, and puts it on again.*

POLLY.

This gentleman seems pretty familiar.

FREEPORT.

Why won't you sit down, madam? you see I do.

MISS LINDON.

Which I think, sir, you ought not to do. I am astonished, sir: I never receive visits from strangers.

FREEPORT.

A stranger, madam! I am very well known; my name's Freeport, a merchant, and rich: inquire of me on 'Change.

MISS LINDON.

Sir, I know nobody in this country, I should be obliged to you if you would not intrude on a person to whom you are an utter stranger, and to whom as a woman you should have shown more respect.

FREEPORT.

I don't mean to incommode you, madam: be at your ease, as I am at mine; you see I am reading the news, take up your tapestry, or drink chocolate with me, or without me, just as you please.

POLLY.

This is an original!

MISS LINDON.

Good heaven! what a visit! and my lord not come. This whimsical fellow distracts me, and I don't know how to get rid of him. How could Fabrice let him in! I must sit down.

[*She sits down, and works, chocolate is brought in; Freeport takes a dish without offering her any; he sips, and talks by turns.*

FREEPORT.

Hark'ee, madam, I hate compliments, I have heard one of the best of characters of you: you are

poor and virtuous, but they tell me you are proud; that's a fault.

POLLY.

And pray, sir, who told you all this?

FREEPORT.

The master of this house, who is a very honest man, and therefore I believe him.

MISS LINDON.

O sir, 'tis all a fable; he has deceived you; not indeed with regard to pride, which always accompanies true modesty; nor as to virtue, which is my first duty; but with regard to that poverty of which he suspects me. Those who want nothing can never be poor.

FREEPORT.

You don't stick to truth, which is even a worse fault than being proud: I know better, I know you are in want of everything, and sometimes deny yourself so much as a dinner.

POLLY.

That's by order of the doctor.

FREEPORT.

Hold your tongue, hussy, do you pretend to give yourself airs too?

POLLY.

What an original!

FREEPORT.

In a word, whether you are proud or not, is nothing to me. I have made a voyage to Jamaica that has brought me in five thousand pounds: now, you must know, it is a law with me, and ought to be

a law with every good Christian, always to give away a tenth part of what I get: it is a debt which I owe to the unfortunate. You are unhappy, though you won't acknowledge it. There's five hundred pounds for you: now, remember, you're paid: let me have no curtseys, no thanks, keep the money and the secret.

[*Throws down a large purse on the table.*

POLLY.

In faith this is more original still.

MISS LINDON.

[*Rising.*

I never was so astonished in my life—alas! how everything conspires to humble me! what generosity! and yet what an affront!

FREEPORT.

[*Reading the news and drinking his chocolate.*

This impertinent writer! a ridiculous fellow to talk such nonsense with an air of consequence—"The king is arrived: he makes a most noble figure, being extremely tall." The blockhead! what signifies it whether he is tall or short? could not he have told us the plain fact?

MISS LINDON.

[*Coming up to Freeport.*

Sir—

FREEPORT.

Well, madam—

MISS LINDON.

What you have done, sir, surprises me still more than what you said: but I cannot possibly accept the

money, as it may not, perhaps, ever be in my power to repay it.

FREEPORT.

Who talks of repaying it?

MISS LINDON.

I thank you, sir, for your goodness, from the bottom of my heart: you have my sincere acknowledgments, my admiration; I can no more.

POLLY.

You are more extraordinary than the gentleman himself. Surely, madam, in the condition you are in, deserted by all the world, you must have lost your senses to refuse an unexpected succor, thus offered you by one of the most generous, though whimsical and absurd men I ever met with.

FREEPORT.

What do you mean by that, madam! whimsical and absurd!

POLLY.

If you won't accept of it for your own sake, take it for mine. I have served you in your ill-fortune, and have some right to partake of the good: in short, sir, this is no time to dissemble, we are in the utmost distress; and if it had not been for our kind landlord, must have perished with cold and hunger. My mistress concealed her condition from all those who might have been of service to us: you became acquainted with it in spite of her: in spite of herself, therefore, oblige her to accept of that which heaven hath sent her by your generous hand.

MISS LINDON.

Dear Polly, you will ruin my honor.

POLLY.

You, my dear mistress, would ruin yourself by your folly.

MISS LINDON.

If you love me, consider my reputation. I shall die with shame.

FREEPORT.

[*Reading.*

What are these women prating about?

POLLY.

And if you love me, madam, don't oblige me to perish with hunger.

MISS LINDON.

O Polly, what think you my lord would say, if still he loves me? could he believe me capable of such meanness? I always pretended to him that I wanted nothing; and shall I receive a present from another, from a stranger?

POLLY.

Your pretence was wrong, and your refusal still more so: as to my lord, he'll say nothing about it, for he has deserted you.

MISS LINDON.

My dear Polly, by our sorrows I entreat you, do not let us disgrace ourselves: contrive in some way to excuse me to this strange man, who means well, though he is so rude and unpolished: tell him, when an unmarried woman accepts such presents, the world will always suspect she does it at the expense of her virtue.

FREEPORT.

[*Reading.*

What does she say?

POLLY.

[*Coming close to him.*

O sir, something mighty ridiculous; she talks of the suspicions of the world, and that an unmarried woman—

FREEPORT.

Is she unmarried then?

POLLY.

Yes, sir, and I too.

FREEPORT.

So much the better. So she says that an unmarried woman—

POLLY.

Cannot take a present from a man—

FREEPORT.

She does not know what she says. Why am I to be suspected of a dishonest purpose, because I do an honest action?

POLLY.

Do you hear him, madam?

MISS LINDON.

I hear, and I admire him, but am still resolved not to accept it: they would say I loved him; that villain. Wasp, would certainly report it, and I should be undone.

POLLY.

[*To Freeport.*

She is afraid, sir, you are in love with her.

FREEPORT.

In love with her! how can that be, when I know nothing of her? indeed, madam, you may make yourself easy on that head; and if perchance some years hence I should fall in love with you, and you with me, well and good; as you determine, I shall determine also; and if you think no more of it, I shall think no more of it; if you tell me I am disagreeable to you, you will soon be so to me; if you desire not to see me, you shall never see me again; and if you desire me to return, I will.

[*Pulls out his watch.*

So fare you well. I have a little business at present. Madam, your servant.

MISS LINDON.

Your servant, sir, you have my esteem and my gratitude; but take your money with you, and once more spare my blushes.

FREEPORT.

The woman's a fool.

MISS LINDON.

Mr. Fabrice, Mr. Fabrice, for heaven's sake come and assist me.

FABRICE.

[*Coming in a violent hurry.*

What's the matter, madam?

MISS LINDON.

[*Giving him the purse.*

Here, take this purse: the gentleman left it by mistake, give it him again, I charge you; assure him of my esteem, and remember I want no assistance from any one.

FABRICE.

[*Taking the purse.*

O Mr. Freeport, I know you by this generous action; but be assured this lady means to deceive you: she is really in want of this.

MISS LINDON.

'Tis false: and is it you, Mr. Fabrice, who would betray me?

FABRICE.

I will obey you, madam.

[*Aside to Freeport.*

I will keep this money; it may be of service to her without her knowing it. My heart bleeds to see such virtue joined to such misfortunes.

FREEPORT.

I feel for her too, but she is too haughty: tell her it is not right to be proud. Adieu.

SCENE VII.

MISS LINDON, POLLY.

POLLY.

Well, madam, you have made a fine piece of work of it; heaven graciously offered you assistance, and you resolve to perish in indigence; I too must fall a sacrifice to your virtue, a virtue which is not without its alloy of vanity: that vanity, madam, will destroy us both.

MISS LINDON.

Death is all I have to wish for: Lord Murray no longer loves me; he has left me these three days;

he has loved my proud and cruel rival; perhaps, he loves her still. I was to blame to think of him, but 'tis a crime I shall not long be guilty of.

[*She sits down to write.*

POLLY.

She seems in despair, alas! she has but too much reason to be so; her condition is far worse than mine: a servant has always some resource, but a woman like her can have none.

MISS LINDON.

[*Folding up her letter.*

'Tis no great sacrifice. There, Polly, when I am no more, carry that letter to him—

POLLY.

What says my dear mistress?

MISS LINDON.

To him who is the cause of my death. I have recommended you to him, perhaps he may comply with my last request: go, Polly, [*embracing her*] and be assured, that amongst all my misfortunes, that of not being able to recompense you as you deserve, is not the least which this wretched heart has experienced.

POLLY.

O my dear mistress, I cannot refrain from tears, you harrow up my soul: what is your dreadful purpose? what means this letter? God forbid I should ever deliver it! [*she tears the letter.*] Alas! madam, why would not you open your heart to Lord Murray? perhaps your cold reserve has disgusted him.

MISS LINDON.

Perhaps so, indeed: my eyes are open now, I must have offended him: but how could I disclose my condition to the son of him who ruined my father and family?

POLLY.

How, madam! was it my lord's father who—

MISS LINDON.

Yes, it was he who persecuted my father, had him condemned to death, deprived us of our nobility, and took away everything from us: left as I am without father, mother, or fortune, I have nothing but my reputation and my fatal love. I ought to detest the son of Murray: misfortune, that still pursues me, brought me acquainted with him. I have loved him, and I ought to suffer for it.

POLLY.

O madam, you grow pale, your eyes are dim.

MISS LINDON.

May grief perform that office for me, which sword or poison—

POLLY.

Help here, Mr. Fabrice, help; my mistress faints.

FABRICE.

Help, help here! where are ye all, my wife, my servants, come down; tell the gentlemen above—help here—

[*Fabrice's wife, her maids, and Polly, carry off Miss Lindon into her chamber.*

MISS LINDON.

[*As she is going out.*

Why will ye bring me back to life again? let me die in peace.

SCENE VIII.

MONTROSS, FABRICE.

MONTROSS.

What's the matter, landlord?

FABRICE.

That beautiful young lady, sir, I told you of, fainted away just now: but it will be over soon.

MONTROSS.

O the mere effect of vapors in young girls; they are not dangerous: what service could I be of? why call me down for this? I thought the house must have been on fire.

FABRICE.

I had rather it were, than this sweet creature should be hurt. If Scotland has many such beauties as her, it must be a charming country.

MONTROSS.

Is she Scotch then?

FABRICE.

So it seems; though I knew it but to-day: our news-writer tells me so, and he knows everything.

MONTROSS.

And what's her name?

FABRICE.

She calls herself Lindon.

MONTROSS.

That's a name I'm not acquainted with. [*He walks about.*] The bare mention of my country rives my heart. Was ever man treated with such cruelty and injustice as I have been? Barbarous Murray, thou art dead; but thy son survives: I will have justice or revenge. O my dearest wife, my children, my daughter! I have lost all. This sword had long since ended all my cares, did not the hopes of sweet revenge force me still to bear the detestable load of life.

FABRICE.

[*Returning.*

Thank God! all is well again.

MONTROSS.

What sudden change has happened then?

FABRICE.

O, sir, she has recovered her senses, and is pretty well; looks still pale, but always beautiful.

MONTROSS.

O it's nothing. I must go out—I must run the hazard—I will.

[*Exit.*

FABRICE.

This man does not trouble himself much about young ladies that faint; but if he had seen Miss Lindon, he would not be so indifferent.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

LADY ALTON, ANDREW.

LADY ALTON.

Yes: since I can't see the villain at home, I'll see him here: he'll certainly come. This news-writer told me truth, and was in the right of it: a Scotch-woman concealed in these dangerous times! she must be in a conspiracy against the state; she shall be seized; the order is given; at least I am too sure she conspires against me: but here comes Andrew, my lord's servant; I will know the whole of my misfortune. Andrew, you have got a letter from my lord, have not you?

ANDREW.

Yes, madam.

LADY ALTON.

For me.

ANDREW.

No, madam.

LADY ALTON.

How? have not you brought me several from him?

ANDREW.

Yes, madam: but this is not for you; 'tis for a certain person whom he is most desperately in love with.

LADY ALTON.

Well, and was not he most desperately in love with me when he used to write to me?

ANDREW.

O no, madam, he loved you calmly and coldly; 'tis quite another thing here; he neither sleeps nor eats, runs about day and night, and does nothing but talk of his dear Lindon. O there's a great deal of difference, I assure you.

LADY ALTON.

Perfidious wretch! but no matter: I tell you that letter is for me: 'tis without a superscription, is not it?

ANDREW.

Yes, madam.

LADY ALTON.

Were not all the letters you brought me without a superscription too?

ANDREW.

Yes, madam; but this I know is for Miss Lindon.

LADY ALTON.

I tell you 'tis for me, and to prove it to you, here are ten guineas for you.

ANDREW.

Indeed, madam, I begin to think the letter was for you; I was certainly mistaken: but if after all it is not, I hope you will not betray me; you may say you found it at Miss Lindon's.

LADY ALTON.

O leave that to me.

ANDREW.

After all, where is the harm in giving a love letter designed for one woman to another? they are all

alike; and if Miss Lindon does not receive this letter, she may have twenty others. I have executed my commission, and made a pretty good hand of it too.

LADY ALTON.

[*Opens the letter, and reads.*

Now for it—"My dear, amiable, and truly virtuous Miss Lindon"—that's more than ever he said to me—"'tis now two days, an age to me, since I had the happiness of seeing you: but I have denied myself that pleasure with the hopes of serving you. I know what you are, and what I owe you. I will change the face of your affairs, or perish in the attempt. My friends are zealous for you. Depend on me as on the most faithful of lovers, and one who will endeavor to prove himself worthy of your affection."

This is an absolute conspiracy; there can be no doubt of it: she is a Scotchwoman, and her family ill disposed to the government. Murray's father commanded in Scotland: his friends, he says, are zealous; he runs about day and night: 'tis certainly a conspiracy. Thank God, I am as zealous as he, and if she does not accept my offers, she shall be seized in an hour's time, before her vile lover comes to her assistance.

SCENE II.

LADY ALTON, MISS LINDON, POLLY.

LADY ALTON.

[*To Polly, who is passing from her mistress's apartment towards the coffee-room.*

You, madam, go immediately and tell your mis-

tress I must speak with her; she need not be afraid; I shall say nothing to her but what will be agreeable, and concerns her happiness: let her come immediately, immediately, do you hear? she need not be afraid, I say.

POLLY.

O madam, we are afraid of nothing; but your looks make me tremble.

LADY ALTON.

I'll see if I can't persuade this virtuous lady to do as I would have her: I'll make my proposals, however.

MISS LINDON.

[*Comes in trembling, supported by Polly.*

What are your commands with me, madam? are you come again only to insult me in my distress?

LADY ALTON.

No: I come to make you happy. I know you are worth nothing; I am rich; I now make you an offer of one of my seats on the borders of Scotland, with all the lands belonging to it; go and live there, you and your family, if you have any; but you must immediately quit my lord forever, nor must he know of your retreat as long as you live.

MISS LINDON.

Alas! madam, he has abandoned me: be not jealous of a poor unfortunate: in vain you offer me a retreat; I shall soon find one without you, an eternal one, in a place where I need not blush at my obligations to you.

LADY ALTON.

Rash woman, is this an answer for me?

MISS LINDON.

Rashness, madam, would ill suit with my condition; firmness and intrepidity will much better become it: my birth, madam, is as good as yours; my heart, perhaps, much better; and as to my fortune, it shall not depend on any one, much less on my rival.

[*Goes out.*

LADY ALTON.

[*Alone.*

It shall depend on me. I am sorry she reduces me to this extremity, and am ashamed to make use of this rascal, Wasp; but she obliges me to it. Faithless lover! unhappy passion! O! I am choked with rage.

SCENE III.

FREEPORT AND MONTROSS [*in the coffee-room, with Fabrice's wife, and servants putting things in order.*

FABRICE, LADY ALTON.

LADY ALTON.

[*To Fabrice.*

Mr. Fabrice, you see me here often; but 'tis your own fault.

FABRICE.

On the contrary, madam, we could wish—

LADY ALTON.

I am more concerned than you can be; but you shall see me again, I assure you.

[*She goes out.*

FABRICE.

So much the worse. What would she be at now? What a difference there is betwixt her and the beautiful patient Miss Lindon!

FREEPORT.

True; she is, as you say, beautiful and virtuous.

FABRICE.

I am sorry this gentleman never saw her; I am sure he would be greatly affected with her behavior.

MONTROSS.

[*Aside.*

Wretch that I am! I have other things to think of.

FREEPORT.

I am always either on'Change or at Jamaica; but one can't help liking now and then to see a fine woman: she is really a fine creature, a sweet behavior, a charming countenance, and has something noble in her air and demeanor.—I must see her again one day or other. 'Tis pity she's so proud.

MONTROSS.

My landlord here informs me you behaved to her in a most generous manner.

FREEPORT.

Who I? no. Would not you, or any man in my place, have done the same?

MONTROSS.

If I had been rich, and she had merit, I believe I might.

FREEPORT.

What is there in it then to be wondered at? [*He takes up the papers.*] Well, what news have we to-day? How's this? Lord Falbridge dead!

MONTROSS.

Falbridge dead! the only friend I had on earth, or from whom I could expect relief? O fortune, fortune, wilt thou ever persecute me?

FREEPORT.

Was he your friend? I am sorry for you.—"Edinburgh, April 14. Great search is being made after Lord Montross, condemned to lose his head about eleven years ago."

MONTROSS.

Just heaven! what do I hear? What's that, sir, Lord Montross condemned—

FREEPORT.

Yes, sir, Lord Montross; there, sir, read it yourself.

MONTROSS.

[*Looking on the paper.*

'Tis so indeed. [*Aside.*] I must get away as fast as I can; this place is too public: sure, earth and hell conspired together never heaped so many misfortunes on one man. [*To his servant.*] John, let my horses be saddled, perhaps I may be going towards evening—how bad news flies!

FREEPORT.

Bad news, why so? what signifies it whether Lord Montross is beheaded or not? everything passes away—to-day a head is cut off, to-morrow we have

it in the newspapers, and next day we talk no more of it. If this Miss Lindon was not so proud, I would go and ask her how she did; she is very handsome, and a very worthy creature.

SCENE IV.

To them a King's Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Is your name Fabrice, sir?

FABRICE.

Yes, sir, your commands with me?

MESSENGER.

You keep a coffee-house, and let lodgings?

FABRICE.

I do, sir.

MESSENGER.

You have a young Scotch lady in your house, named Lindon?

FABRICE.

I have, sir, and esteem it a great happiness.

FREEPORT.

A most beautiful and virtuous lady; everybody tells me so.

MESSENGER.

I come to seize her by order of the government; there's my warrant.

FABRICE.

Amazing! I shudder at the thought.

MONTROSS.

A young Scotchwoman seized on the very day of my arrival! O my unhappy family, my country, what will become of my unfortunate daughter! she is, perhaps, the victim of my misfortunes, languishing in poverty and a prison: why was she ever born?

FREEPORT.

I never heard of young girls being seized by order of the government: I am afraid, Mr. Messenger, you are a rascal.

FABRICE.

If she is a fortune-hunter, as Wasp said, it will ruin my house; I am undone: this court lady had some reasons I see plainly—and yet she must be good and virtuous.

MESSENGER.

Let's have none of your reasons, sir, to prison, or give bail, that's the rule.

FABRICE.

I'll give you bail, myself, my house, my goods, my person.

MESSENGER.

Your person's nothing; the house, perhaps, not your own—your goods, where are they? I must have money.

FABRICE.

Good Mr. Freeport, shall I give him the five hundred pounds which she so nobly refused, and which are still in my possession?

FREEPORT.

Ay, ay, I'll give five hundred, a thousand, two thousand; I'll be answerable for it, my name's Free-

port. I believe the girl's strictly virtuous; but she should not be so proud.

MESSENGER.

Come, sir, give us your bond.

FREEPORT.

With all my heart.

FABRICE.

'Tis not every one employs their money thus.

FREEPORT.

To spend it in doing good is putting it out to the best interest.

[*Freeport and the Messenger retire to the corner of the coffee-room to count out the money.*

SCENE V.

MONTROSS, FABRICE.

FABRICE.

You are astonished, sir, at Mr. Freeport; but 'tis his constant practice: happy are those whom he takes a fancy to! he is no complimenter, but does a man a service in less time than others spend in making protestations about it.

MONTROSS.

[*Aside.*

There are still in the world some noble souls—what will become of me?

FABRICE.

We must take care not to let the poor young lady know anything of the danger she has been in.

MONTROSS.

I must be gone this night.

FABRICE.

One should never tell people of their danger till it is past.

MONTROSS.

The only friend I had in London is dead: what should I do here?

FABRICE.

We should make her faint away a second time.

SCENE VI.

MONTROSS.

A young Scotchwoman is seized, a person who lives retired, and is suspected by the government. I don't know why, but this adventure throws me into deep reflections. Everything conspires to awaken the memory of my sorrows, my afflictions, my misfortunes, and my resentment.

SCENE VII.

MONTROSS.

[*Seeing Polly crossing the stage.*

One word with you, madam, are you that pretty amiable young lady, born in Scotland, who—

POLLY.

Yes, sir—I, I am tolerably young, and a Scotchwoman; and as to pretty they say I am not amiss.

MONTROSS.

Have you any news from your own country?

POLLY.

No, sir, I have left it a long time.

MONTROSS.

And what are your relations, pray?

POLLY.

My father was an excellent baker, as I have heard, and my mother waiting-maid to a woman of quality.

MONTROSS.

O, now I understand you. You, I suppose, are servant to that young lady I have heard so much of. I was mistaken.

POLLY.

O sir, you do me too much honor.

MONTROSS.

You know who your mistress is, I suppose?

POLLY.

Yes, sir, the sweetest and most amiable of her sex, and one too who has the most fortitude in affliction.

MONTROSS.

She is in distress then?

POLLY.

Yes, sir, and so am I: but I had rather serve her in affliction than be ever so happy.

MONTROSS.

But don't you know her family?

POLLY.

My mistress, sir, desires to remain unknown: she has no family: sir, why do you ask me these questions?

MONTROSS.

To remain unknown! say you? O heaven, if I could at last—but 'tis a vain imagination. Tell me, pray, how old is your mistress?

POLLY.

One may safely tell her age. She is just eighteen.

MONTROSS.

Eighteen! the very age of my dear Montross, my lovely infant, the only remaining hope of my unhappy family—eighteen sayest thou?

POLLY.

Yes, sir, and I am but two and twenty, there's no great difference between us. I see no reason why you should make so many reflections on her age.

MONTROSS.

Eighteen, and born in my country, desires to remain unknown! I cannot contain myself—by your permission I must see and talk to her immediately.

POLLY.

Telling him of a girl of eighteen has turned this old gentleman's brain.—You can't possibly see her at present, sir, she's in the greatest distress.

MONTROSS.

For that very reason I must see her.

POLLY.

O, sir, fresh griefs and calamities have torn her heart, and deprived her of her senses. She is not one of those I assure you, sire, who faint away for nothing; she is but just now come to herself, and the little rest she now enjoys is mixed with grief and bitterness. Have pity, sir, on her condition.

MONTROSS.

All you say but increases my desire. I am her countryman, and partake of her afflictions, perhaps I may be able to lessen them; permit me, I beg you, before I leave this place, to have an interview with her.

POLLY.

You affect me deeply, sir; stay here a few minutes. It is impossible a young lady, who has just fainted away, should be able to receive visits immediately. I'll go to her, and come back to you soon.

SCENE VIII.

MONTROSS, FABRICE.

FABRICE.

[*Pulling him by the sleeve.*

Sir, is there nobody near us?

MONTROSS.

With what impatience shall I wait for her return!

FABRICE.

Can nobody hear us?

MONTROSS.

I can never support this anxiety.

FABRICE.

They are in search of you, sir,—

MONTROSS.

Who, where, what?

FABRICE.

I say, sir, they are in search of you; I cannot help interesting myself in the safety of those who lodge in my house. I don't know who you are, sir, but I have been asked a thousand questions about you. They have surrounded the house, passing, and repassing, getting all the information they can. In short I shall not be surprised if in a little time they should pay you the same compliment as they did the young lady, who, it seems, is of the same country.

MONTROSS.

I must speak with her before I go.

FABRICE.

Take my advice, sir, and get away as fast as you can; our friend, Freeport, perhaps might not be in the humor to do as much for you as for a girl of eighteen.

MONTROSS.

Pardon me, but I know not where I am; I scarce heard you—what must I do, or where can I go? my dear sir, I cannot go without seeing her: let me talk to you a little in private: I must beg you some how or other to let me have an opportunity of seeing this young lady.

FABRICE.

I told you before, you would want to see her. I assure you nothing can be more beautiful, more virtuous, or more agreeable.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

FABRICE, WASP.

[*At a table in the coffee-room.*

FREEPORT [*Smoking a pipe.*

FABRICE.

I must be so free as to tell you, Mr. Wasp, if I may believe all that is said of you, you would do me a favor by never coming to my house again.

FREEPORT.

All that is said is generally false: what fly has stung you, Mr. Fabrice?

FABRICE.

You come, and write your papers here, Mr. Wasp; and my coffee-house will be looked on as a poison shop.

FREEPORT.

[*To Fabrice.*

This fellow seems to deserve what you say.

FABRICE.

[*To Wasp.*

They say you speak ill of all mankind.

FREEPORT.

Of all mankind! that's too much indeed.

FABRICE.

They begin even to say you are an informer, and a scoundrel, but I am loth to believe them.

FREEPORT.

[*To Wasp.*

Do you hear, sir? this is past raillery.

WASP.

I am an illustrious writer, sir, a man of taste.

FABRICE.

Taste or no taste, sir, I say you have done me an injury.

WASP.

So far from it, sir, that I have helped off your coffee, made it fashionable to come to your house, 'tis my reputation that has brought you custom.

FABRICE.

A fine reputation indeed! that of a spy, a bad author, and a worse man!

WASP.

Stop, Mr. Fabrice, if you please. You may attack my morals, but my works—I will never suffer that.

FABRICE.

Your writings, sir, are not worth my consideration; but you are suspected of a design against the amiable Miss Lindon.

FREEPORT.

If I thought so, I would drown the dog with my own hands.

FABRICE.

'Tis said, you accused her of being Scotch, and the honest gentleman too who lives above stairs.

WASP.

Well, and suppose I had, what harm is there in being of any particular country?

FABRICE.

'Tis moreover reported that you have had several conferences with the agents of a certain choleric lady who comes here, and with the servants of a noble lord, who used to frequent this house: that you tell tales, and blow up quarrels.

FREEPORT.

[*To Wasp.*

Are you really such a rogue? then shall I detest you.

FABRICE.

O thank God! here comes my lord, if I am not mistaken.

FREEPORT.

A lord, is it? then your humble servant, I hate a lord, as much as I do a bad writer.

FABRICE.

He's not like other lords, I assure you.

FREEPORT.

Like other lords or not, 'tis no matter. I never love to be disturbed, so fare you well. I don't know how it is, my friend, but I am always thinking of this young Scotchwoman—I'll come back presently —immediately. I want to talk seriously to her—your servant. This Scotchwoman is handsome, and

a good creature.—Adieu—[*returning*] tell her, I intend to serve her greatly.

SCENE II.

LORD MURRAY.

[*Pensive and in great agitation.*

WASP.

[*Bowing to him, of which he takes no notice.*

FABRICE.

[*At a distance from him.*

LORD MURRAY.

[*To Fabrice.*

I'm glad to see you, friend: how is that charming girl you have the pleasure to boast of as your lodger here?

FABRICE.

She has been very ill, sir, since she saw you: but I'm sure she will be better now.

LORD MURRAY.

Great God, thou protector of innocence, I implore thee for her; O deign to make me an instrument in doing justice to virtue, and sheltering the unfortunate from oppression! Thanks to thy goodness, and my own endeavors, I have hopes of success. Hark'ee, friend, I would talk a little with that man.

[*Pointing to Wasp.*

WASP.

[*To Fabrice.*

You see, sir, you were mistaken, and I have some credit still at court.

FABRICE.

[*Going out.*

That's not quite so clear.

LORD MURRAY.

[*To Wasp.*

Well, my friend—

WASP.

[*Bowing.*

Permit me, my lord, to dedicate a volume to your lordship—

LORD MURRAY.

No, sir, we are not talking about dedications: you are the person that informed my servants of the arrival of the old gentleman just come from Scotland; you described him, and made the same report to the minister of state.

WASP.

My lord, I only did my duty.

LORD MURRAY.

[*Giving him a purse.*

You have done me a service without knowing it: but I don't consider the intention. Some folks say you meant to hurt, and have done good: there's something for your service. But if ever from this time forward you so much as pronounce the name of that gentleman, or of Miss Lindon, I'll throw you out at window,—away, be gone, sir.

WASP.

My lord, I return you thanks; everybody abuses me, and gives me money; I am certainly a cleverer fellow than I thought I was.

SCENE III.

LORD MURRAY.

[*Alone.*

An old gentleman just arrived from Scotland; Miss Lindon born in the same country! alas! if it were possible to repair the cruel injuries my father did—if heaven would graciously permit—but I'll go in. [*To Polly, who comes out of Miss Lindon's apartment.*] Polly, were not you surprised at not seeing me for so long a time? two whole days! I should not have forgiven myself had I not been engaged in my dear Miss Lindon's service: the ministers of state were at Windsor, and I was obliged to follow them there. Heaven surely inspired thee, when thou toldst me, Polly, the secret of her birth.

POLLY.

I'm frightened yet, my mistress so often forbade me: were I to give her the least uneasiness I should die with grief. Alas! sir, your absence this very day threw her into a fainting fit, and I believe I should have fainted too, if I had not exerted all my strength to assist her.

LORD MURRAY.

There, Polly, there's something for the fainting fit you had like to have fallen into.

[*Gives her money.*

POLLY.

My lord, I thank you; I am not so high spirited as my mistress, who refuses to accept of anything; and pretends to be quite at her ease, when she is absolutely starving.

LORD MURRAY.

Good heaven! the daughter of Montross reduced to poverty! how guilty am I! but I will repair everything, her condition shall soon be changed: why would she so long conceal it from me?

POLLY.

'Tis the only thing in which she deceived you, or I believe ever will.

LORD MURRAY.

But let us go in, I long to throw myself at her feet.

POLLY.

O my lord, not yet; she is now with an old gentleman, a very old gentleman, who is her countryman, and they are saying such tender things.

LORD MURRAY.

Who is this old gentleman? methinks I am already interested in his favor.

POLLY.

I know nothing of him.

LORD MURRAY.

Would to God he were the person I wish him to be! and what did they say to each other?

POLLY.

They began to grow very serious, the gentleman seemed to wish me out of the room, and so I came away.

SCENE IV.

LADY ALTON, LORD MURRAY, POLLY.

LADY ALTON.

So, sir, at last I've caught you: thou base perfidious man, now sir, I am convinced of your inconstancy, and my own disgrace.

LORD MURRAY.

True, madam, you are so. [*Aside.*] what an unseasonable intrusion!

LADY ALTON.

Perfidious monster!

LORD MURRAY.

A monster I may appear in your eyes, and I am glad of it; but perfidious I never was; 'tis not my character: before I loved another, I frankly told you I had no longer any regard for you.

LADY ALTON.

After a promise of marriage, wretch, after so many protestations of love!

LORD MURRAY.

When I made those protestations I loved you, and when I promised to marry you, I meant to do so.

LADY ALTON.

And why then did not you keep your word? what prevented you?

LORD MURRAY.

Your character, your fiery temper and disposition: marriage was intended to make us happy, and I saw too plainly we were not made for each other.

LADY ALTON.

And so you have quitted me for a wandering lady errant, a poor fortune-hunter.

LORD MURRAY.

No, madam, I leave you for softness and goodnature, for every grace, and every virtue.

LADY ALTON.

But you are not yet possessed of her: know, traitor, I will be revenged, and speedily too.

LORD MURRAY.

I know your vindictive temper, know you have more envy than jealousy, more rage than tenderness, but you will be forced to honor and respect the woman I love.

LADY ALTON.

I know the object of your affection, sir, better than you do; know I who she is; I know too who that stranger is, who came hither yesterday: yes sir, I am acquainted with it all, and so are they who have more power and authority than Lord Murray: that unworthy rival, for whom I am despised, shall soon be seized and taken from you.

LORD MURRAY.

What says she, Polly? I'm terrified at the thought.

POLLY.

And so am I. We are undone, sir.

LORD MURRAY.

Stay, madam, explain yourself—hear me.

LADY ALTON.

I'll hear nothing, answer nothing, explain nothing: you are an inconstant, false-hearted, perfidious villain. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

LORD MURRAY, POLLY.

LORD MURRAY.

What does this fury mean? her jealousy is terrible: heaven grant I never may be jealous! she talks of having my dear girl seized, and pretends to know this stranger. What would she be at?

POLLY.

To tell you the truth, my mistress has been taken up by order of the government, and I too, I believe; and if it had not been for an honest fat man, who is goodness itself, and who gave in bail for us, we had both been in prison at this very time. They had made me swear not to tell you anything of it: but how can I conceal it from you?

LORD MURRAY.

What do I hear? misfortune on misfortune! your mistress's very name I find is suspected. Alas! my family was born to be the destruction of hers: heaven, fortune, justice, and love would repair all, but guilt opposes me. It shall not, must not triumph; do not alarm my dear girl. I'll go myself to the ministry! Try everything, do everything to save

her. I'll deny myself the happiness of seeing her till I can assure her of success. I fly, Polly, to serve her, and will return immediately. Tell her I have left only because I adore her.

[*Going out.*

POLLY.

This is a strange adventure. I see this world is nothing but a perpetual contest between the virtuous and the wicked, and we poor girls are always the sufferers.

SCENE VI.

MONTROSS, MISS LINDON.

[*Nods to Polly, who goes out.*

MONTROSS.

Every word you utter pierces my soul: born in Lochaber! persecuted, oppressed, and deserted! a woman with such noble sentiments!

MISS LINDON.

Those sentiments, sir, perhaps are owing to my misfortunes: had I been brought up in ease and luxury, my soul, which is fortified by adversity, had been weak and vain.

MONTROSS.

O thou art worthy of a nobler fate. You acknowledge to me you are sprung from one of the proscribed families, whose blood was shed on a scaffold in our civil wars. But still you conceal from me your name and birth.

MISS LINDON.

Duty binds me to silence. My father himself was proscribed: they are even now in search of him, and were I to name perhaps I might destroy him. You inspire me, I own, with uncommon tenderness and respect, but I know you not, and I have everything to fear. You see I am myself suspected, and am a prisoner here. One word might ruin me.

MONTROSS.

One word perhaps might give me the greatest comfort: but tell me only what age you were of when you parted from your father, who was afterwards so unhappy?

MISS LINDON.

I was then but five years old.

MONTROSS.

Great God, have mercy on me! everything she says contributes to throw new light on my dark paths! O providence, do not withdraw thy goodness from me!

MISS LINDON.

You weep, sir, alas! nor can I help joining my tears with yours.

MONTROSS.

[*Wiping his eyes.*

Go on, I conjure you: after your father had quitted his family to see it no more, how long did you remain with your mother?

MISS LINDON.

I was ten years old when she died in my arms, oppressed with grief and misery, and after she had heard that my brother was killed in battle.

MONTROSS.

O, I faint; what a dreadful moment! O thou dear, unhappy wife, and thou more fortunate son, to die without seeing so much misery! do you remember this picture? [*Takes a picture out of his pocket.*

MISS LINDON.

What do I see? is this a dream? surely 'tis my mother's picture.

MONTROSS.

It is, it is your mother; and I am that unhappy father who is condemned to death, whose trembling arms now embrace thee.

MISS LINDON.

Do I live? where am I? O, sir, behold me at your knees: this is the first happy moment of my life: O, my father! alas! how darest you venture hither? I tremble for you, even whilst I am thus happy in your sight.

MONTROSS.

My dearest child, you know the misfortunes of our family; you know that the house of Murray, still jealous of ours, plunged us into these calamities. I have lost all: one friend alone remained, who by his interest and power might have restored me, and had promised it; but on my arrival here, I find that friend is dead, that I am searched after in Scotland, and a price put on my head. 'Tis, no doubt, the son of my old enemy who still persecutes me: I will die by his hand, or be revenged on him.

MISS LINDON.

And come you then with a resolution to kill Lord Murray?

MONTROSS.

Yes: I will avenge you and my family, or die. I only hazard a life already devoted to the scaffold.

MISS LINDON.

O fortune, in what new horrors dost thou involve me! what must I do? O my father!

MONTROSS.

My dearest daughter! how cruel is thy fate to be born of such a wretched father!

MISS LINDON.

O sir, I am much more unhappy than you think me: are you resolved on this fatal enterprise?

MONTROSS.

Ay, to death.

MISS LINDON.

O, my dear father, let me conjure you by that life which you gave me, by your misfortunes, by my own, which are, perhaps, still greater, do not expose me to the dread of losing you; have pity on me, spare your own life, and preserve mine.

MONTROSS.

Your voice reaches to my inmost soul: methinks I hear in thee, thy much-loved mother; speak, what would you?

MISS LINDON.

Do not expose your precious life, but quit this dangerous place, dangerous for us both: yes, I am resolved I will renounce all for my dear father's sake. I am ready to follow you, I will accompany you, sir, to some far distant island, and there these

hands shall labor to support you. It is my duty, and I will perform it: 'tis done, away.

MONTROSS.

I must not then avenge you?

MISS LINDON.

No, sir, that vengeance would destroy me: come, let us be gone.

MONTROSS.

Well, I submit. The father's love prevails over all: since you have the courage to accompany me, I will go: I will prepare everything for our departure from London within this hour: be ready: one more embrace, and farewell.

SCENE VII.

MISS LINDON, POLLY.

MISS LINDON.

'Tis all over, Polly: I shall never see Lord Murray again.

POLLY.

Indeed, madam, but you will; he'll be here in a few minutes: he is but just gone from hence.

MISS LINDON.

Gone from hence! and not see me; this is worse than all. O my unhappy father! why did we not go before?

POLLY.

If he had not been interrupted by that detestable Lady Alton.

MISS LINDON.

What! did he meet her here after all to insult me! after leaving me for three days without so much as writing! to affront me so grossly. O if my life were not necessary to my dear father, this moment would I part from it.

POLLY.

But hear me, madam, I swear to you my lord.—

MISS LINDON.

Perfidious wretch! but all men are so. O my poor father! hereafter I will think on none but thee.

POLLY.

On my soul, madam, you are wrong; my lord is not false or perfidious, but one of the best of men: he loves you from his soul, and has given me convincing proofs of it.

MISS LINDON.

Nature should be superior to love. I know not whither I am going, or what will become of me; but certainly I can never be more miserable than I am at present.

POLLY.

My dear mistress, you will hear nothing; recover your spirits a little: I tell you, you are beloved.

MISS LINDON.

O Polly, will you follow me?

POLLY.

To the end of the world, madam: but hear me; you are beloved, indeed you are.

"O POLLY, WILL YOU FOLLOW ME?"

"O POLLY, WILL YOU FOLLOW ME?"

MISS LINDON.

Let me alone; talk no more to me of my lord: alas! if he did love me, I must leave him—that gentleman you saw with me—

POLLY.

Well—

MISS LINDON.

Come in, and I'll tell you all: tears and sighs will not let me speak: follow me, and get everything ready for our departure.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

MISS LINDON, FREEPORT, FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Polly, I find, is packing up your things; you are going to leave us: you can't imagine, madam, the concern it gives me.

MISS LINDON.

My dear landlord, and you, sir, to whom I am so much indebted for your unmerited generosity, I am sorry it is not in my power to return it; but be assured I shall never, whilst I have life, forget you.

FREEPORT.

What is all this, what is all this? if you like us, why do you leave us? you aren't afraid of anything are you? a girl, like you, can have nothing to fear.

FABRICE.

Mr. Freeport, the old gentleman, who it seems is her countryman, is going too. The lady wept, and he wept, at parting; and I am ready to weep too.

FREEPORT.

Ridiculous! I never wept in my life: our eyes were never given us for that purpose: I own I'm sorry. Though she is a little proud, as I told you, yet she is such a good creature, one can't help being concerned at losing her. If you go, madam, you must write to me; I shall always be glad to do you any service: perhaps we may meet again one day or other, who knows! but be sure you don't forget to write to me.

MISS LINDON.

I assure you, sir, I will; and if ever fortune—

FREEPORT.

Fabrice, I'm sure this woman is well-born. I shall expect a letter from you, but don't put too much wit into it.

FABRICE.

You will forgive me, madam, but I really don't think you are at liberty to go hence, as Mr. Freeport is bail for you, and must lose five hundred pounds if you leave us.

MISS LINDON.

O heaven! another distress! another humiliation! must I then remain here? and my lord——my father too.—

FREEPORT.

[*To Fabrice.*

O don't let that stop her—there is something in her that charms me—but let her go as soon as she

pleases: you don't suppose I value five hundred pounds. Hark'ee, Fabrice, put five hundred more into her portmanteau. I beg, madam, [*to Miss Lindon*] you will go whenever it is agreeable to you; write to me, and let me see you when you return; for I have really conceived a great esteem and affection for you.

SCENE II.

LORD MURRAY *and servants at one part of the stage,* MISS LINDON *and the rest at the other.*

LORD MURRAY.

[*To his servants.*

Stay you here: and do you run to the court of chancery, and bring me those parchments as soon as they are finished: go you and get things ready at my new house. [*Pulls a paper out of his pocket, and reads.*] What happiness it will be to make her happy!

MISS LINDON.

[*To Polly.*

O Polly, I am distracted at the sight of him.

FREEPORT.

This lord always comes in unseasonably: he is handsome and well-made, and yet I don't like him: but what's that to me? I have certainly some regard for her; but I am not in love with her.—Madam, your servant.

MISS LINDON.

I shall not go, sir, without paying my respects to you.

FREEPORT.

O pray, madam, no ceremony; perhaps it may affect me too much. Don't think I'm in love with you, madam; but I should be glad to see you once more before you go: I shall be in the house, and must see you set out. Go, Fabrice, and help the good gentleman above. I find I have a prodigious regard for this young lady.

SCENE III.

LORD MURRAY, MISS LINDON.

LORD MURRAY.

At length once more I am happy in the sight of all I hold dear on earth. What a house is this for Miss Lindon! but one more worthy of her is prepared: you look down and weep: for heaven's sake what has happened to you? who was that surly looking fellow talking with you? if he is the cause of your uneasiness, he shall soon repent it.

MISS LINDON.

Alas! my lord, he is one of the best of men; one who has taken pity on my misfortunes; who has never abandoned, never insulted me; one who never talked to my rival without deigning to look on me; one who, if he had loved me, would not have let three days pass without writing.

LORD MURRAY.

Believe me, when I tell you, I had rather die than merit the least of those cruel reproaches. I absented myself but for your sake, thought of nothing but you, and have served you in spite of yourself: if, on

my return here, I found that clamorous revengeful woman, could I help it? I went back again immediately to counteract her fatal designs. My God, not write to you!

MISS LINDON.

No.

LORD MURRAY.

I see she has intercepted my letters; her baseness increases, if possible, my passion; may it recall yours! how unkind was it in you to conceal from me your name and condition! a condition so unworthy of you.

MISS LINDON.

Who disclosed them to you?

LORD MURRAY.

[*Pointing to Polly.*

She, your confederate.

MISS LINDON.

Did you betray me?

POLLY.

You betrayed yourself, madam; I served you.

MISS LINDON.

You know me then; you know what hatred hath always divided our families: your father was the cause of mine being condemned to death; he reduced me to that wretched state which I endeavored to conceal from you; and you, his son, now dare avow a passion for me!

LORD MURRAY.

I do; I adore you; 'tis what I owe you: my love shall repair the injuries my father did: 'tis the jus-

tice of providence: my heart, my fortune, and my life, are at your disposal: let us unite these hostile names. Here is a contract of marriage; shall I hope to see it executed?

MISS LINDON.

Alas! my lord, it is impossible; I am going this moment to leave you forever.

LORD MURRAY.

Going? to leave me forever? sooner shall you behold me perish at your feet: am I at last rejected then?

POLLY.

I say, madam, you must not go; you are always making some desperate resolution: but I shall bring you to yourself again. My lord, you must second me.

LORD MURRAY.

Who could inspire you with this cruel design to fly from me, to render all my cares abortive?

MISS LINDON.

My father.

LORD MURRAY.

Your father? where is he? what does he mean to do with you? inform me quickly.

MISS LINDON.

He's here, and means to carry me away with him; it is resolved.

LORD MURRAY.

No: by thy dear self I swear, it must not, shall not be: where is he? conduct me to him.

MISS LINDON.

My dearest lord, take care; let him not see you: he is come hither to finish his misfortunes by taking away your life, and I have consented to fly with him to divert him from this dreadful resolution.

LORD MURRAY.

Yours is more cruel still; but be assured I fear him not, nay hope one day to make him my friend. —This fellow not returned yet! O heaven! how swift is every evil thing, how slow is every good!

MISS LINDON.

My father comes: if you love me, do not let him see you; spare him the horror of such an interview: for heaven's sake retire, at least for a while.

LORD MURRAY.

'Tis with the utmost regret that I submit; but you command, and I must obey. I will go in, and return with arms that shall make his drop out of his hand.

SCENE IV.

MONTROSS, MISS LINDON.

MONTROSS.

Come, my dear daughter, my only comfort and support, let us be gone.

MISS LINDON.

O thou unhappy father of a more unhappy daughter, never, never will I leave you; but permit me to stay here a little longer.

MONTROSS.

What! after your urgent entreaties that I would go immediately; after having promised to follow me to some desert solitude, where I may forget my disgrace! have you changed your design? have you so soon forgot the tender sentiments you so lately expressed?

MISS LINDON.

Indeed, sir, I am not changed: I am incapable of such baseness; I will follow you: but once more let me entreat you, stay a little while: grant but this favor to her who owes to you a life of sorrows; do not refuse me a few precious moments.

MONTROSS.

They are indeed precious, and yet you would lavish them away: consider we are every moment in danger of being discovered, that you have yourself been seized, that they are even now in search of me, and that to-morrow you may see your father given up to an ignominious death.

MISS LINDON.

Those words are as a clap of thunder to me. I submit, sir: I am ashamed to have stayed so long; but I had a distant hope—no matter; you are my father, and I'll follow you. O me!

SCENE V.

FREEPORT *and* FABRICE *on one side of the Stage,* MONTROSS *and his daughter on the other.*

FREEPORT. [*To Fabrice.*

Her servant has carried the portmanteau back to

her chamber: they'll not go yet; I'm glad of that, however. I began to have a sort of liking for her; not that I'm in love with her; but she is so well-bred, there is no parting from her without some uneasiness; a kind of anxiety that I never felt before: there's something very extraordinary in it.

MONTROSS.

[*To Freeport.*

Sir, your servant; we are just going to set out, with hearts full of gratitude to you for past favors: I assure you I never met with a worthier man than yourself: you almost reconcile me to mankind.

FREEPORT.

You are going then, sir, and this lady I suppose: I'm sorry for it: you should have staid a little longer; indeed you should. I have just now thought of something, that, perhaps, might not be disagreeable to you: pray, stay.

SCENE VI.

LORD MURRAY.

[*To them, taking a roll of parchment from his servant.*

'Tis well: thank heaven! I have at last got the pledge of my future happiness.

FREEPORT.

[*Aside.*

A plague on this lord, here he is again: I hate him for being so agreeable.

MONTROSS.

[*To his daughter, while Lord Murray is talking to his servant.*

Who is that man, my dear?

MISS LINDON.

It is, sir—it is—O heaven! have mercy on me!

FABRICE.

'Tis my Lord Murray, sir, one of the finest gentlemen in this kingdom, and the most generous.

MONTROSS.

Murray! O heaven! my fatal enemy, who comes to insult me, to triumph over my misfortunes [*draws his sword*] but he shall have my life, or I his.

MISS LINDON.

O stop, my father, what would you do?

MONTROSS.

Cruel daughter! and is it thus you have betrayed me?

FABRICE.

[*Stepping between them.*

No violence, I beg, sir, in my house; you will ruin me.

FREEPORT.

Why should you hinder people from fighting, if they have a mind to it?

LORD MURRAY.

[*At a distance from Montross.*

You are the father of that charming woman?

MISS LINDON.

O, I die.

MONTROSS.

I am, sir; I'll not deny it. Come then, thou cruel son of a still more cruel father, I know thy purpose; come, and take my life.

FABRICE.

Again, sir—

LORD MURRAY.

Stop him not: I have that which will disarm him.

[*Draws his sword.*

MISS LINDON.

[*Sinking into the arms of Polly.*

Cruel man! and dare you—

LORD MURRAY.

Yes, I dare—I am the son of your inveterate foe; and thus [*throwing away his sword*] I attack you.

FREEPORT.

Here's another for you, sir.

LORD MURRAY.

Now, sir, with one hand strike this guilty breast, and with the other receive this paper—read, and know me.

MONTROSS.

What do I see? my pardon signed, my honors restored, my family re-established! O heaven! and is it to you, to Lord Murray, I owe it all. O! my friend, my benefactor, now you triumph more, much more, than if I had fallen by your sword.

MISS LINDON.

O unexpected happiness! my lover then is worthy of me.

LORD MURRAY.

O my father, permit me to embrace you.

MONTROSS.

How shall I repay such generosity?

LORD MURRAY.

[*Pointing to Miss Lindon.*

There, sir, is my reward.

MONTROSS.

The father and the daughter are both yours forever.

FREEPORT.

[*To Fabrice.*

My friend, I was afraid this lady was not made for me: however, she is fallen into good hands, and I am satisfied.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

NANINE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Count d'Olban, a nobleman retired into the country.

The Baroness de l'Orme, a relation of the Count's, a haughty, imperious woman, of a bad temper, and disagreeable to live with.

The Marchioness d'Olban, mother of the Count.

Nanine, a young girl, brought up in the Count's house.

Philip Hombert, a peasant in the neighborhood.

Blaise, the gardener.

Germon, Marin, } Servants.

Scene, the Count d'Olban's country seat.

This Comedy is called in the French *Nanine, ou le Préjugé Vaincu* (Nanine, or Prejudice Overcome). It is written, as we are told in the title-page, in verses of ten syllables. The absurdity of comedies in rhyme I have already remarked. The original begins thus:

> Il faut parler, il faut, Monsieur le *Comte,*
> Vous expliquer nettement sur mon *Compte.*

The reader cannot but observe, what villainous rhymes *Comte* and *Compte* are, and perhaps will more readily forgive my reducing this comedy into plain prose. It was produced in 1749.

NANINE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

THE COUNT D'OLBAN, THE BARONESS DE L'ORME.

BARONESS.

In short, my lord, it is time to come to an explanation with regard to this affair; we are no children; therefore, let us talk freely: you have been a widower for these two years past, and I, a widow about as long: the lawsuit in which we were unfortunately engaged, and which gave us both so much uneasiness, is at an end; and all our animosities, I hope, now buried with those who were the causes of them.

COUNT.

I am glad of it; for lawsuits were always my aversion.

BARONESS.

And am not I as hateful as a lawsuit?

COUNT.

You, madam?

BARONESS.

Yes, I, sir: for these two years past we have lived together, with freedom, as relations and friends; the ties of blood, taste, and interest, seem to unite us, and to point out a more intimate connection.

COUNT.

Interest, madam? make use of some better term, I beseech you.

BARONESS.

That, sir, I cannot; but with grief I find, your inconstant heart no longer considers me in any other light than as your relative.

COUNT.

I do not wear the appearance, madam, of a trifler.

BARONESS.

You wear the appearance, sir, of a perjured villain.

COUNT.

[*Aside.*

Ha! what's this?

BARONESS.

Yes, sir: you know the suit my husband began against you, to recover my estate, was, by agreement, to have been terminated by a marriage; a marriage you told me, of choice; you are engaged to me, you know you are; and he who defers the execution of his promise seldom means to perform it.

COUNT.

You know, I wait for my mother's consent.

BARONESS.

A doting old woman: well, sir, and what then?

COUNT.

I love and respect her yet.

BARONESS.

But I do not, sir. Come, come, these are idle, frivolous excuses for your unpardonable falsehood: you wait not for her, or for anybody; perfidious, ungrateful man!

COUNT.

Who told you so, madam, and whence all this violence of passion? who told you so? whence comes your information, madam?

BARONESS.

Who told me? yourself, yourself. Your words, your manner, your air, your whole behavior, put on on purpose to affront me: it shocks me to see it: act in another manner, or find some better excuses for your conduct: can you think me blind to the shameful, unworthy passion that directs you, a passion for the lowest, meanest object? you have deceived me, sir, basely deceived me.

COUNT.

'Tis false, I cannot deceive; dissimulation is no part of my character. I own to you, there was a time when you were agreeable to me; I admired you, and flattered myself that I should have found in you a treasure to make amends for that which heaven had deprived me of; I hoped in this sweet asylum to have tasted the fruits of a peaceful and happy union: but you have found out the means to destroy your own power. Love, as I told you long since, has two quivers: one filled with darts, tipped with the purest flame, which inspires the soul with tender feelings, refines our taste and sentiments, enlivens our affection, and enhances our pleasures; the other is full of cruel arrows, that wound our hearts with quarrels, jealousy, and suspicion, bring on coldness and indifference, and remove the warmth of passion to make room for disgust and satiety: these, madam, are the darts which you have drawn forth, against us both, and yet you expect that I should love.

BARONESS.

There, indeed, I own myself in the wrong: I ought not to expect it: it is not in your power: but you are false, and now would reproach me for it. and I must suffer your insults, your fine similes and illustrations: but pray, sir, what is it I have done to lose this mighty treasure? what have you to find fault with?

COUNT.

Your temper, your humors, madam: beauty pleases the eye alone, softness and complacency charm the soul.

BARONESS.

And have not you your humors, too, sir?

COUNT.

Doubtless, madam; and, for that very reason, would have an indulgent wife; one whose sweet complying goodness would bend a little to my frailties, and condescend to reconcile me to myself, to heal my wounds without burning them, to correct without assuming, to govern without being a tyrant, to insinuate herself by degrees into my heart, as the light of a fine day opens gradually on the weak and delicate eye: he who feels the yoke that is put on him will always murmur at it; and tyrannic love is a deity that I abjure: I would be a lover, but not a slave: your pride, madam, would make me contemptible: I have faults, I own I have; but heaven made woman to correct the leaven of our souls, to soften our afflictions, sweeten our bad humors, soothe our passions, and make us better and happier beings: this was what they were designed for; and, for my part, I would prefer ugliness and affability to beauty with pride and arrogance.

BARONESS.

Excellently well moralized, indeed; and so when you insult, abuse, and betray me, I in return, with mean complacency, must forgive the shameful extravagance of your passion; and your assumed air of grandeur and magnanimity must be a sufficient excuse to me for all the baseness of your heart.

COUNT.

How, madam?

BARONESS.

Yes, sir: I know you: it is the young Nanine who has done me this injury; a child, a servant, a field beggar, whom my foolish tenderness nourished and supported; whom your fond, easy mother, touched with false pity, took up out of the bosom of penury and sorrow. O you blush, sir, do you?

COUNT.

I, madam? I wish her well.

BARONESS.

You love her, sir: I know you do.

COUNT.

Well, madam, and if I did love her, know, I would openly avow it.

BARONESS.

Nay, I believe you are capable of it.

COUNT.

I am so.

BARONESS.

And would you break thus through all the bounds of decency, degrade your rank, demean your birth,

and, plunged as you are in shame and infamy, laugh at and defy all honor?

COUNT.

Call it prejudice: whatever you, or the world may think, madam, I never mistake vanity for honor and glory: you love pomp and splendor, and place grandeur and nobility in a coat of arms: I look for it in the heart. The man of worth, who has modesty with courage, and the woman who has sense and spirit, though without fortune, rank, or title, are, in my eyes, the first of human kind.

BARONESS.

But surely they ought to have some rank and condition in life. Would you treat a low-born scholar, or an honest man of the meanest birth, because he had a little virtue, in the same manner and with the same respect as you would a lord?

COUNT.

The virtuous should always have the preference.

BARONESS.

This extravagant humility is insupportable: do we owe nothing then to our rank?

COUNT.

Yes: to be honest.

BARONESS.

My noble blood would aspire to a higher character.

COUNT.

That is a high one which defies the vulgar.

BARONESS.

Thus you degrade all quality.

COUNT.

No: thus I do honor to humanity.

BARONESS.

Ridiculous! what then becomes of the world? what is fashion?

COUNT.

Fashion, madam, is despised by wisdom: I will obey its ridiculous commands in my dress perhaps, but not in my sentiments: no: it becomes a man to act like a man, to preserve to himself his own taste and his own thoughts: am I ridiculously to ask of others what I am to seek, or to avoid, to praise, or condemn? must the world decide my fate? surely I have my reason, and that should be my guide: apes were made for imitation only, but man should act from his own heart.

BARONESS.

Why, this, to be sure, is freedom of sentiment, and talking like a philosopher. Go, then, thou noble and sublime soul, go, and fall in love with village damsels, be the happy rival of plowmen and hedgers: go, and support the honor of your race.

COUNT.

Good heaven! what must I do? How am I to act?

SCENE II.

THE COUNT, THE BARONESS, BLAISE.

COUNT.

Well, sir, what do you want?

BLAISE.

Your poor gardener, sir, humbly beseeches your honor—

COUNT.

My honor! well, Blaise, and what wouldst thou have of my honor?

BLAISE.

And please, your honor, I would fain—be married and—

COUNT.

With all my heart, Blaise, you have my consent; I like your design, and will assist you. It is well folks should marry. Well, and thy spouse elect, Blaise, what is she? handsome?

BLAISE.

O yes, sir, a delicate little morsel.

BARONESS.

And does she like you, Blaise?

BLAISE.

O yes.

COUNT.

Well, and her name is?

BLAISE.

Yes, 'tis—

COUNT.

What?

BLAISE.

The pretty Nanine.

COUNT.

Nanine?

BARONESS.

Well, very well indeed! I approve of the match extremely.

COUNT.

[*Aside.*

O heaven! how am I sunk! it cannot, must not be.

BLAISE.

I'm sure, master will like it.

COUNT.

What! did you say she loved you, rascal?

BLAISE.

I beg pardon, sir, I—

COUNT.

Did she tell you that she loved you, sir?

BLAISE.

Why, no, sir, not absolutely, sir; not directly; but she seemed to have a little sort of a sneaking kindness for me, too: a hundred times has she said to me in the prettiest, softest, most familiar tone, "Help me, my dear friend Blaise, to make a fine nosegay for my lord, that best of masters;" then would she make the nosegay with such a pretty air, and look so thoughtful, and so absent, and so confused, and so—O it was plain enough.

COUNT.

[*Aside.*

Away, Blaise, get thee gone—Oh! and am I agreeable to her then?

BLAISE.

Nay, master, now don't put off this little affair of mine.

COUNT.

Ha!

BLAISE.

You shall see how this little spot of land will thrive under our hands soon: why won't you answer me, sir? You say nothing.

COUNT.

[*Aside.*

Oh! my heart is too full: I must retire—madam, your servant.

SCENE III.

THE BARONESS, BLAISE.

BARONESS.

[*To herself.*

He loves her to distraction, of that I'm positive: by what charms, by what happy address, could she thus steal his heart from me? Nanine! good heaven! what a choice! what madness! Nanine! no! I shall burst with disappointment.

BLAISE.

What did you say, madam, about Nanine?

BARONESS.

[*To herself.*

Insolent creature!

BLAISE.

Is not Nanine a charming girl?

BARONESS.

No.

BLAISE.

Well, I say no more; but do speak for me, speak for poor Blaise.

BARONESS.

What a dreadful stroke is this!

BLAISE.

I have a little money, madam, a few crowns: my father left me three good acres of land, and they shall be hers; money, and land, everything I have, body and soul, Blaise and all.

BARONESS.

Believe me, Blaise, I wish you as well as you can wish yourself, and should be glad to serve you: I should be glad to see you married this very night: nay, what's more, I'll give her a portion.

BLAISE.

O good, dear baroness! how I do love you! is it possible you can make me so happy?

BARONESS.

Alas! Blaise, I am afraid I cannot; we shall never succeed.

BLAISE.

O but you must, madam.

BARONESS.

I wish to God she was your wife: wait for my orders.

BLAISE.

And must I wait? not long I hope.

BARONESS.

Be gone.

BLAISE.

Servant, madam: I shall have her, I shall have her.

SCENE IV.

BARONESS.

[*Alone.*

What a strange adventure! could I have received a more cruel injury? a more shameful affront? the Count d'Olban rivalled by a gardener—here, boy, [*she calls out to her servant*] fetch Nanine to me: since I am so unhappy, I must examine her: where could she have learned this art of flattery? who taught her to gain hearts, and to preserve them, to light up a strong and a lasting flame? where? doubtless, in her eyes, in plain and simple nature: but this shameful and unworthy passion of his is still a secret; it has not dared as yet to appear openly. D'Olban, I see, has his scruples about it: so much the worse; if he had none, I might still have hopes; but he has all the symptoms of true love: O here she comes, the sight of her hurts me; nature is most unjust, to bestow so much beauty on such a creature; 'tis an affront to nobility: come this way, madam.

SCENE V.

THE BARONESS, NANINE.

NANINE.

Madam.

BARONESS.

And yet, after all, she is not so very handsome;

those great black eyes of hers express nothing; but if they have said, I love; ay, there's the danger: but I must—come this way, child.

NANINE.

I come, madam, as is my duty.

BARONESS.

Yes: but you make me wait a little for you; prithee, child, step on: how awkwardly she is made! what a mien there is! he was never made for such a creature as you.

NANINE.

'Tis very true, madam: I assure you; I have often blushed in secret when I looked on these fine clothes: but they were your first present to me, the effect of that goodness which I shall ever acknowledge, and of that generous care with which you were pleased to honor me: you took a pride in dressing me: O madam, remember how often you have protected me: believe me, madam, I am still the same: why should you wish to humble a submissive heart, which can never forget itself?

BARONESS.

Bring that couch nearer to me—O I am distracted: whence come you? what have you been about?

NANINE.

Reading, madam.

BARONESS.

Reading what?

NANINE.

An English book that was given me.

BARONESS.

What's the subject of it?

NANINE.

'Tis extremely interesting: the author would have us believe that we are all brethren, all born equal, and on a level with each other; but 'tis an idle chimera, I can't reconcile myself to his doctrine.

BARONESS.

[*Aside.*

She will soon, I suppose—what vanity! [*To Nanine*] bring me my standish, and pen and ink.

NANINE.

Yes, madam.

BARONESS.

No; stay: give me something to drink.

NANINE.

What, madam?

BARONESS.

Nothing: it's no matter: take my fan. Go and get my gloves—or—stay—it does not signify, you need not: come hither: I desire you to take care never to think yourself handsome.

NANINE.

That, madam, is a lesson you have so often taught me that if I had so much vanity, and self-love had such influence over my foolish heart, you would soon have cured me of it.

BARONESS.

[*Aside.*

Where can she have learned all this? how I hate her! beauty and wit together! 'tis intolerable—hark'ee, child, you know the tenderness I had for you in your infancy.

NANINE.

Yes, madam, and I hope my youth will be honored with equal goodness from you.

BARONESS.

Be careful then to deserve it: it is my intention now, this very day, nay, this very hour, to fix and establish your happiness; judge then whether I love you.

NANINE.

To fix my happiness?

BARONESS.

Yes: I will give you a portion: the husband I design for you is well-made, and in every way worthy of you; a proper match for you in every particular, and the only one that at present could suit you: you ought to thank me for the choice: in a word, 'tis Blaise, the gardener.

NANINE.

Blaise, madam?

BARONESS.

Yes: why that simpering? do you hesitate a moment to consent? my offers, madam, I would have you know, are commands; obey, or expect my resentment.

NANINE.

But, madam—

BARONESS.

Let me have no *buts;* they offend me: a pretty thing indeed, for your impertinence to refuse a husband at my hands! that simple heart of yours is swelled to a fine degree of vanity: but your boldness is a little premature, and your triumph will be of

short duration: you take advantage of the capricious fortune of one lucky day, but shall soon see what will be the event. You ungrateful little wretch, have you the insolence to please? you understand me, madam, but I'll bring you back to that nothingness whence you came, and you shall lament your folly and your pride: I'll shut you up for the rest of your life in a convent.

NANINE.

On my knees I thank you, madam; do shut me up, my fate will be too mild: yes, madam, of all the benefits you have ever bestowed on me, this, which you call a punishment, I shall esteem the greatest favor: shut me up forever in a cloister; there, I will thank you for your goodness, and bless my dear master: there I shall learn to calm those cruel fears, those dreadful alarms, those worst of evils, those passions that are far more dangerous to me even than your resentment, which fill me with terror and astonishment: O madam, by that anger, I entreat you, deliver me, save me, save me, if possible, from myself; this moment I am ready to go.

BARONESS.

What do I hear? can it be? are you in earnest, Nanine, or mean you to deceive me?

NANINE.

No: indeed I do not. O do me this charming, this divine favor; my heart stands too much in need of it.

BARONESS.

[*With transport.*

Rise then, and let me embrace you. O happy hour! my dear Nanine, my friend, I'll go this instant

and prepare your sweet retreat; O 'tis a charming thing to live in a convent!

NANINE.

'Tis at least a shelter from the world, and all its cares.

BARONESS.

O my dear, 'tis a delightful situation.

NANINE.

Do you think so, madam?

BARONESS.

This world is a hateful place—jealous—

NANINE.

[*Sighing.*

'Tis so indeed.

BARONESS.

Foolish, wicked, vain, deceitful, inconstant, and ungrateful: O 'tis a horrid place.

NANINE.

Yes, I see it would be fatal to me, I ought to flee from it.

BARONESS.

You ought indeed: a good convent is the best haven of security. Now, my good lord, I think I shall be beforehand with you.

NANINE.

Did you say anything about my master, madam?

BARONESS.

O Nanine, I love you even to madness: this moment I would, if possible, lock you up never to come out again: but to-night it is too late, we must wait till morning. Hark'ee, child, come to me at

midnight to my apartment, and we will set off secretly for the convent: be ready by five at the latest.

SCENE VI.

NANINE. [*Alone.*

How distressful is my condition! what trouble and uneasiness do I feel! and what various passions rise in my soul! to leave so good, so amiable a master, perhaps to offend him by it: and yet, if I had stayed, this excess of his goodness might have brought on worse calamities, and put his whole family in confusion. The baroness seems apprehensive that he has a particular regard for me: but his heart could never stoop so low; I must not, dare not think of it: and my lady seems desperately angry about it: am I hated then, and should I be afraid of being beloved? O but myself, myself I have most reason to fear, and my foolish heart, that beats so at the thought of him. What will become of me? taken out of my humble state, my notions now are too refined and too exalted: it is a misfortune, nay, and it is a fault, too, to have a mind above one's condition. I must go: I know it will kill me: but no matter.

SCENE VII.

THE COUNT, NANINE, *a Servant.*

COUNT.

Stay at that door there somebody, d'ye hear? bring chairs here, quick, make haste. [*He bows to Nanine, who makes him a low courtesy.*] Come, sit down.

NANINE.

Who, I, sir?

COUNT.

Yes: I will have it so: I mean to pay you, Nanine, that respect which your conduct, your beauty, and merit deserve: shines the diamond with less lustre, or is it less valuable, because found in a desert? What's the matter? your eyes seem bathed in tears: O I see it but too plainly; our angry baroness, jealous of your charms, has been venting her ill-humors on you, and left my poor girl weeping.

NANINE.

No, sir, no: her goodness, I assure you, to me was never greater than at present; but everything here softens and affects me.

COUNT.

I'm glad to hear it; I was afraid it was some of her malice.

NANINE.

Why so, sir?

COUNT.

O my dear girl, jealousy reigns in every breast: every man is jealous when he is in love, and every woman even before she is so. A young and beautiful girl, who at the same time is good-natured and sincere, is sure to displease her whole sex: men are more just, and we endeavor as well as we can to revenge ourselves on you for your jealousy: but, with regard to Nanine, I only do her justice, I love that heart which is void of artifice; I admire the display of those extraordinary talents which you have so finely cultivated; and I am both surprised and charmed at the ingenuous simplicity of your manners.

NANINE.

O sir, my merit is small indeed; but I have seen you, have heard and been instructed by you: you have raised me too high above my humble birth: I owe you but too much: from you only I have learned to think.

COUNT.

O Nanine, wit and good sense are not to be taught.

NANINE.

I think too much, I fear, for one in my station: my fortune designed me for the lowest rank in life.

COUNT.

Your virtues have placed you in the highest: but tell me ingenuously, what effect had that English book I lent you?

NANINE.

Not convinced me at all, sir: I am more than ever of opinion, that there are hearts so noble and so generous, that all others must appear mean and vile when put in comparison with them.

COUNT.

True, Nanine, and you are yourself a proof of it: but permit me to raise you for the future to a rank and station here less unworthy of you.

NANINE.

My condition, sir, is already too high, and too desirable for me.

COUNT.

No, Nanine, that cannot be: henceforward I shall consider you as one of the family; my mother is

coming, she will look on you as her daughter; my esteem, and her tender friendship, will put you on a different footing, and place you in a better rank than you have hitherto held under a proud and imperious woman.

NANINE.

[*Aside.*

She only taught me my duty, sir—and a hard one it is to fulfil.

COUNT.

What duty? yours, Nanine, is only to please, and that you always perform; would I could do so, too! but you should be more at your ease, and appear with more splendor; you are not yet in your proper sphere.

NANINE.

I am indeed quite out of it, and it is that which makes me unhappy; 'tis my misfortune, perhaps an irreparable one. [*Rising.*] O my lord, my master, remove, I beseech you, from me all these vanities: I am confused, overwhelmed with your excess of goodness; let me live unknown and unenvied; heaven formed me for obscurity, and humility has nothing in it that to me is grating or disagreeable: leave me to my retreat; what should I do in the world, what should I wish to see there, after the admiration of your virtues?

COUNT.

[*To himself.*

It is too much, I can resist no longer.

[*To Nanine.*

You remain in obscurity? you?

NANINE.

Whatever I may do, permit me to ask one favor of you.

COUNT.

What is it? speak.

NANINE.

For some time past you have loaded me with presents.

COUNT.

Pardon me, Nanine, I acted but as a tender father who loved his child: I have not the art to set off my presents by flattery, I aim not at gallantry, and only desire to be just: fortune had done you wrong, and I meant to avenge the injury: but nature, in recompense for it, lavished all her bounties on you, and her I strove to imitate.

NANINE.

You have done a great deal too much; but I flatter myself I may be permitted, without being thought ungrateful, to dispose of those noble presents, which I shall ever hold dear because they came from you.

COUNT.

You mean to affront me, sure.

SCENE VIII.

THE COUNT, NANINE, GERMON.

GERMON.

My lady wants you; she waits.

COUNT.

Let her wait then: what! can't I speak a moment to you without being interrupted?

NANINE.

It gives me pain to leave you; but you know, sir, she was my mistress.

COUNT.

No: I know it not, nor ever will.

NANINE.

She has still a power over me.

COUNT.

No such thing: she shall have none—you sigh, Nanine, there's something at the bottom of that heart; what's the matter?

NANINE.

I am sorry to leave you, sir—but I must—O heaven, now all is over.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE IX.

THE COUNT, GERMON.

COUNT.

[*To himself.*

She wept as she left me; for a long time she has groaned beneath the tyrannical caprice of this peevish baroness, who insults her: and by what right, or what authority? but 'tis an abuse which I will never suffer: this world is nothing but a lottery of wealth, titles, dignities, rights, and privileges, bartered for

without legal claim, and scattered without distinction—here, you—

GERMON.

My lord.

COUNT.

To-morrow morning lay this purse of a hundred louis d'ors on her toilette; be sure you don't fail; you must then go and see after her servants below, they'll wait there.

GERMON.

The baroness shall certainly have them on her toilette according to your orders.

COUNT.

Blockhead, they're not for her: for Nanine, I tell you.

GERMON.

O very well, sir, I beg pardon.

COUNT.

Begone, leave me. [*Germon goes out.*] This tenderness of mine can never be a weakness in me: true, I idolize her; but my heart was not touched by her beauty only, her character is to the last degree amiable: I admire her soul; but then her low condition—it is too high; were she lower, I should love her yet more: but can I marry her? doubtless I may; can one pay too dear for being happy? shall I fear the censure of an idle world, and let pride deprive me of all I wish for? but then custom—a cruel tyrant: nature has a prior right, and should be obeyed: and so I am Blaise's rival, too; and why not? Blaise is a man; he loves her, and he is in the right of it: she can be but in the possession of one,

though the desire of all: gardeners may sigh for her, and so may kings: my happiness will justify my choice.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

THE COUNT, MARIN.

COUNT.

[*To himself.*

Well; this night is a whole year to me: not once have I closed my eyelids: everybody is asleep but me; Nanine sleeps in peace, a sweet repose refreshes her charms, while I wander from place to place, and can find no rest: I sit down to write, but can't: then strive to read, but all in vain; I don't know the words before me while I am looking on them, nor can my mind retain a single idea: methinks, in every page, I see the name of Nanine imprinted by some hand divine—hullo! who's there? all asleep? Germon, Marin.

MARIN.

[*Behind the scenes.*

Coming, sir.

COUNT.

You idle rascals, make haste, it's broad daylight; come, come.

MARIN.

Lord, sir, what spirit has raised you up so early this morning?

COUNT.

Love.

MARIN.

O ho! my lady will let none of us sleep long in this house; what did you want, sir?

COUNT.

Why, Marin, I must have, let me see, by to-morrow at the latest, six new horses, a new equipage, a clever chambermaid, notable and careful, a valet de chambre, and two footmen, young and well-made, and no libertines; some diamonds, some very fine buckles, some gold trinkets, and some new stuffs; therefore, be gone, ride post to Paris this instant, never mind killing a few horses.

MARIN.

O ho, I see how it is; you are caught; my lady baroness is to be our mistress to-day, I suppose; you are going to be married to her at last?

COUNT.

Whatever my intention is, go you about your business; fly, and make haste back.

MARIN.

I'm gone, sir.

SCENE II.

THE COUNT, GERMON.

COUNT.

[*To himself.*

And shall I then enjoy the sweet pleasure of honoring, of making happy the dear object of my love? The baroness, I know, will be in a rage: with all my heart, let her rave as long as she will; I

despise her, and the world, and its opinion; and am afraid of nobody: I will never be the slave of prejudice; it is an enemy whom we ought to subdue, those who make a rational mind more virtuous, and those only are respectable: but hark! what noise is that in the court? a chariot sure: it must be so; yet who could come at this time in the morning? my mother perhaps. Germon—

GERMON.

Sir.

COUNT.

What is that?

GERMON.

A chariot, sir.

COUNT.

Whose is it? anybody coming here?

GERMON.

No, sir, they're going.

COUNT.

Going? who? where?

GERMON.

The baroness, sir, going out immediately.

COUNT.

O with all my heart, let her go forever if she pleases!

GERMON.

Nanine and she are this minute setting out.

COUNT.

O heaven! what sayest thou? Nanine?

GERMON.

So the maid says, sir.

COUNT.

How is this?

GERMON.

My lady, sir, is going with her this morning, to put her into a neighboring convent.

COUNT.

Away: fly: let us begone: but what am I about? I am too warm to talk to them: no matter, I'll go; I ought—but stop, that must not be, I should at once discover all my passion: no—go, Germon, stop them, let everything be fast; bring Nanine to me, or answer it with your life. [*Germon goes out.*] So they would have carried her off! what a dreadful stroke! ungrateful, cruel, unjust woman! how have I deserved this! what have I done! I only loved and adored her; but never declared my passion; never endeavored to force her inclinations, or to alarm her timid innocence: why should she fly from me? the more I think of it, the more I am astonished.

SCENE III.

THE COUNT, NANINE.

COUNT.

My sweet girl, is it you? what, run away from me? answer me, explain this mystery to me: terrified, I suppose, with the baroness's threats, you were willing to escape; and that tender regard which I have long had for your virtues, I know,

has quickened her resentment; surely you could not yourself have thought of leaving me, of depriving this place of its fairest ornament: last night, when I saw you in tears, tell me, Nanine, had you any intention of this? answer me, tell me, why would you have wished to leave me?

NANINE.

Behold me on my knees, and trembling before you.

COUNT.

[*Raising her up.*

Rise, Nanine, and tell me—I tremble more myself.

NANINE.

My lady, sir—

COUNT.

Well—what of her?

NANINE.

That lady, sir, whom I honor and esteem, did not, I assure you, force me to the convent.

COUNT.

And could it then be your own choice? O misery!

NANINE.

It was, I own it was: I entreated her to restrain my wandering thoughts—she wanted to marry me.

COUNT.

Indeed? to whom?

NANINE.

To your gardener.

COUNT.

O the worthy choice!

NANINE.

I, sir, was ashamed, and to the last degree unhappy: I who in vain endeavor to stifle sentiments far above my condition, I whom your bounty had raised too high, must now be punished by the loss of that goodness which I never deserved.

COUNT.

You punish yourself, Nanine, and for what?

NANINE.

For having dared to raise the resentment of your relation, sir, who was once my mistress; I know, sir, I am disagreeable to her; the very sight of me disgusts her: she has reason indeed, for when I was near her, I was guilty of a weakness which I shall ever feel; it grows on me every hour: but I would have torn it from my breast; I would have humbled, by the austerities of a convent, this proud heart, exalted by your goodness, and revenged on it the involuntary crime: but the bitterest grief I felt. was my fear of offending you.

COUNT.

[*Turning from her, and walking about.*

What sentiments! what a noble and ingenuous mind! Can she be prejudiced in my favor? was she afraid of loving me? O exalted virtue!

NANINE.

If I have offended you, I beg a thousand pardons; but permit me, sir, in some deep retreat to hide my sorrows, and to reflect in secret on my own duty, and your goodness to me.

COUNT.

No more of that: now, observe me, the baroness is your friend, and out of her generosity has provided you with a servant, a rustic, a boor, for your husband. I know of one who will at least be less unworthy of you: in birth and fortune far superior to Blaise; young, honest, and well provided for: a man, I assure you, of sense and reflection; his character very different from those of the present age: if I am not much mistaken, he'll make you an excellent husband: is not this better than a convent?

NANINE.

No: sir, I own to you, this new favor which you would bestow on me has nothing in it that can give me any real satisfaction: you know my grateful heart, read there my real sentiments, and see why I wish to retreat from the world: a gardener, or the monarch of the whole world, who should offer marriage to me, would be equally displeasing.

COUNT.

You have determined me: and now, Nanine, know the man for whom I have designed you: you already esteem him: he is yours; he adores you: that husband is—myself. I see, you are troubled and surprised: but speak to me; my life depends on you: O recollect yourself, you are strangely agitated.

NANINE.

What do I hear? can it be?

COUNT.

It is no more than you deserve.

NANINE.

In love with me? O do not think, do not imagine I

will ever dare to claim my conquest: no, sir, never will I suffer you to descend thus low for me: such marriages, believe me, sir, are always unhappy: fancy vanishes, and repentance alone remains. No, I will call your ancestors to witness—alas! sir, think not on me: you took pity on my youth: this heart, which you have formed, which is your own work, would be unworthy of your care, if it could accept from you this noblest present. No, sir, I owe you at least this refusal: my heart shall sacrifice itself for your sake.

COUNT.

No more: for I am resolved, and you shall be my wife. Did you not this moment assure me you would refuse every other man, though he were a prince?

NANINE.

I did, and repent not of the resolution.

COUNT.

Do you hate me then?

NANINE.

Should I have fled, should I have avoided, should I have feared, if I had hated you?

COUNT.

It is enough, and I am fixed.

NANINE.

What then have you determined on?

COUNT.

Our marriage.

NANINE.

Think, sir.

COUNT.

I have thought of everything.

NANINE.

And foreseen too?

COUNT.

I have.

NANINE.

If you love me, believe me, sir—

COUNT.

I do believe—that I have resolved on the only means to make myself happy.

NANINE.

But you forget—

COUNT.

I have forgotten nothing: everything is ordered, and everything shall be ready.

NANINE.

What! in spite of all I say, will your obstinate passion—

COUNT.

Yes, in spite of you, my impatient love must urge the happy moment. I will quit you for a minute, that henceforth we may never part: adieu, my dear Nanine.

SCENE IV.

NANINE. [*Alone.*

Good heaven! do I dream? or am I indeed arrived at the summit of earthly happiness? 'tis not the honor, great as it is; 'tis not the splendor that dazzles me: no: I despise it all: but to wed the most

generous of men, the dear object of all my timid wishes, him whom I was so much afraid of loving, him whom I adore, yet I love him too much to wish he should demean himself for my sake: but it is impossible to avoid it; I cannot now escape him: what can I do? heaven, I trust, will direct me, and support my weakness, perhaps even—but I'll write to him—and yet how to begin, and what to say—what a surprise! I will write immediately before I enter into this solemn engagement.

SCENE V.

NANINE, BLAISE.

BLAISE.

O there she is: well, my little maid, my lady has spoken to you in my favor, has she not? ha! she writes on, and takes no notice of me.

NANINE.

[*Writing on.*

O Blaise, good morrow to you.

BLAISE.

Good morrow is but a cold compliment.

NANINE.

[*Writing.*

Every word I write doubles my distress, and my whole letter is full of doubts and uneasiness.

BLAISE.

How she writes offhand! O she's a great genius; and a monstrous wit: I wish I was a wit too, then I'd tell her—

NANINE.

Well, sir.

BLAISE.

Lackaday, she's so clever, I'm afraid to speak: I shall never be able to break my mind to her—yet I was hot upon't, and came here o' purpose; that I did.

NANINE.

Dear Blaise, you must do me a piece of service.

BLAISE.

Marry, two an' you will.

NANINE.

I shall trust to your discretion, to your good heart, Blaise; nay, I do you but justice.

BLAISE.

O no ceremony; for look you, ma'am, Blaise is ready to serve you, and there's an end of it. Come, come, make no secret.

NANINE.

You often go to the neighboring village, to Remival, the right hand side of the road.

BLAISE.

Yes, yes.

NANINE.

Could you find one Philip Hombert for me there?

BLAISE.

Philip Hombert? I know nothing of him: what sort of a man is he?

NANINE.

He came there, I believe, but yesterday evening;

do you look him up, and give him immediately this money, and this letter.

BLAISE.

Oh, money is it?

NANINE.

And at the same time deliver him this packet: go on horse-back that you may return the sooner: away, make haste, and be assured I'll remember you for it.

BLAISE.

I would go for you to the world's end—this Philip Hombert is a happy rogue: the purse is full: all ready rhino. What, is it a debt?

NANINE.

Yes: and well proved: nothing can be more sacred, therefore take care of it: hark'ee, Blaise, Hombert may not be known in the village, perhaps he is not yet returned: if you can't give the letter into his own hands, bring it me back again: my dear friend, remember that.

BLAISE.

My dear friend!

NANINE.

I shall depend on you.

BLAISE.

Her dear friend! O lud!

NANINE.

I rely entirely upon you, and expect everything from your fidelity.

SCENE VI.

THE BARONESS, BLAISE.

BLAISE.

What a message! and where the deuce could this money come from? it would have been of service to me in housekeeping: but she has a friendship for me, and that's better than money, so away we go.

[*As he is putting the money and letter into his pocket, he meets the baroness, and runs full against her.*

BARONESS.

How now, booby? a little more and you'd have broken my head.

BLAISE.

I beg your pardon, madam.

BARONESS.

Where are you going? have you heard anything of Nanine? what is she about? is the count in a violent passion? what have you got there, a letter?

BLAISE.

O that's a secret: poise on her!

BARONESS.

Let me look at it.

BLAISE.

Nanine will be angry.

BARONESS.

Nanine! could she write, and send it by you? give

it me this minute, or I'll break off your match immediately; give it me, I say.

BLAISE.

[*Laughing.*

He! he!

BARONESS.

What do you laugh at?

BLAISE.

[*Still laughing.*

Ah! ah!

BARONESS.

I must know the contents of this;—[*Breaks open the letter*] if I am not mistaken, they concern me nearly.

BLAISE.

[*Laughing.*

Ah! ah! ah! how she is nicked now! she has got nothing there but a scrap of paper: but I shall keep the money, and carry it to Philip Hombert: yes, yes, must obey my mistress. Servant, ma'am.

SCENE VII.

THE BARONESS.

[*Alone.*

Now let's see what we have got. [*Reads.*] "Both my joy and tenderness are unspeakable, as is my happiness also: what a moment was this for you to come in! when I cannot see or hear you, cannot throw myself into your arms: but, I conjure you, take these packets, and accept the contents of them. Know, I have been offered a most noble and truly

enviable condition in life, such as I might well be dazzled with the prospect of: but there is nothing which I would not sacrifice to the only one on earth whom my heart ought to love." Very fine indeed! upon my word, Nanine, an excellent style: how prettily she writes! the innocent orphan: her passion speaks most eloquently: a rare billet this! O thou sly jade: thus you deceived poor Blaise, and thus deprived me of my lover: this going into a convent, I find, was all a feint, a pretence; and the count's money, it seems, is for Philip Hombert: thou little coquette! but I am glad of it: the count's perfidiousness to me deserved this return: I thought indeed Nanine's heart was as mean as her birth, and now I am satisfied of it.

SCENE VIII.

THE COUNT, BARONESS.

BARONESS.

But here comes the philosopher, the sentimental Count d'Olban, the wise lover, the man above prejudice: your servant, noble count, approach and laugh, my dear lover, at the most ridiculous circumstance: do you know Philip Hombert, of Remival? but, to be sure, you can't be a stranger to your—rival.

COUNT.

What is all this, pray?

BARONESS.

This billet perhaps will inform you: this Hombert must be a handsome lad.

COUNT.

You are too late, madam, now with your schemes; my resolution once made, I am not to be shaken: be satisfied, madam, with the shameful trick you wanted to play me this morning.

BARONESS.

You'll find this new one worse, I believe: there, read: [*Gives him the letter*] you'll like it vastly: you know the hand, and you know the virtue of the dear nymph that has subdued you: [*While he is reading it he seems confounded, grows pale and angry*] well, sir, what think you of the style?—he sees nothing, says nothing, hears nothing: poor man! but he deserves it.

COUNT.

Did I read aright? it cannot be. I am astonished, thunder-struck; ungrateful sex! perfidious creature!

BARONESS. [*Aside.*

I know his temper well; naturally violent, quick and resolute: he'll do something immediately.

SCENE IX.

THE COUNT, BARONESS, GERMON.

GERMON.

Yonder comes Madam d'Olban: she's in the avenue already.

BARONESS.

Is the old woman returned?

GERMON.

Sir, sir, my lady, your mother, is coming.

BARONESS.

His anger has taken away his hearing: the letter operates finely.

GERMON.

[*Bawling out to him.*

Sir.

COUNT.

Does she think—

GERMON.

[*Aloud.*

My lady, sir, your mother.

COUNT.

What is Nanine doing at this instant?

GERMON.

Writing in her own apartment—but, sir—

COUNT.

[*With an air of coolness.*

Go, seize her papers; bring me what she writes, and then let her be sent away.

GERMON.

Who, sir?

COUNT.

Nanine.

GERMON.

I can never have the heart to do it, sir: O sir, if you knew how she charms us all, so noble, so good!

COUNT.

Do it, sir, or see my face no more.

GERMON.

I obey, sir.

[*He goes out.*

SCENE X.

THE COUNT, BARONESS.

BARONESS.

Now, the day is ours: I give you joy, sir, of your return to reason: now, sir, is it not true as I told you, the low-bred always retain something of their former condition, and persons of family alone have hearts truly noble? Blood, sir, let me tell you, does everything, and meanness of birth will inspire Nanine with sentiments you never suspected her of.

COUNT.

That I don't believe: but come, we'll talk no more about it, but endeavor to make amends for past errors: every man has his follies, at some part of his life; we all go wrong; and he is least to blame who repents the soonest.

BARONESS.

'Tis well observed.

COUNT.

Never mention her to me again: be silent on that head, I entreat you.

BARONESS.

Most willingly.

COUNT.

I beg this subject of our dispute may be entirely forgotten.

BARONESS.

But will you remember then your former vows?

COUNT.

Well, well, I understand you, I will.

BARONESS.

And quickly, too, or you will not repair the injury: our marriage so shamefully deferred is an affront—

COUNT.

That shall be made amends for; but, madam, we must have—

BARONESS.

Have what? we must have a lawyer.

COUNT.

You know, madam, that—I waited for my mother.

BARONESS.

And here she comes.

SCENE XI.

THE MARCHIONESS D'OLBAN, THE COUNT, BARONESS.

COUNT.

[*To his mother.*

Madam, I should have—[*Aside*] O Philip Hombert! [*To his mother*] but you have prevented me: my respect and tenderness—[*Aside*] with that air of innocence too! perfidious wretch!

MARCHIONESS.

Why, you rave, child; I heard indeed, as I passed through Paris, that your head was a little touched, and I find there was some truth in it; how long has this misfortune—

COUNT.

Good heaven! how confused I am!

MARCHIONESS.

Does it seize you often?

COUNT.

It never will again, madam.

MARCHIONESS.

I should be glad to speak with you alone. [*Turns to the baroness and makes her a formal courtesy.*] Good morrow, madam.

BARONESS.

[*Aside.*

The old fool! [*Turning to the Marchioness*] Madam, I leave you the pleasure of entertaining the count at your leisure, and retire.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE XII.

THE MARCHIONESS, THE COUNT.

MARCHIONESS.

[*Talking very fast, and in the manner of a little prattling old woman.*

Well, sir, and so you intend to make the baroness my daughter-in-law: 'twas this, to tell you the truth, that brought me here so soon: she's a peevish, impertinent, proud, opinionated creature, and one who never had the least regard for me: last year, when I supped with the Marchioness Agard, she said before all the company, I was a babbler. Lord for-

bid I should ever sup there again: a babbler! besides, I know, between you and me, she is not so rich; and that, let me tell you, son, is a great point, and we ought to be well-informed about it: they tell me that the Château d'Orme did but half of it belong to her husband, and that the other half was disputed by a long lawsuit, that is not finished to this day: that I had from your grandpapa, and he always told the truth: ay, he was a man; there are few such nowadays: there is nothing now at Paris but a set of half-men, vain, foolish, impertinent coxcombs, talking on every subject, and laughing at times past. Oh, their eternal clack distracts me, prating about new kitchens, and new fashions: we hear of nothing now but bankrupts, and distress, and ruin: the wives, in short, are licentious, and the husbands simpletons: everything grows worse and worse.

COUNT.

[*Reading the letter over again.*

Who could have thought it? this is a desperate stroke indeed. Well, Germon?

SCENE XIII.

THE MARCHIONESS, THE COUNT, GERMON.

GERMON.

Here's your lawyer, sir.

COUNT.

O let him wait.

GERMON.

And here's the paper, sir, she sent you.

COUNT.

[*Reading.*

Give it me—well, let me see: she loves me, she says here, and refuses me out of—respect. Faithless woman! thou hast not told me the true reason of that refusal.

MARCHIONESS.

My son's head is certainly turned: 'tis the baroness's doing: love has taken away his senses.

COUNT.

[*To Germon.*

Is Nanine gone! shall I be rid of her?

GERMON.

Alas! sir, she has already put on her old rustic garb with the greatest modesty, and never murmured or complained.

COUNT.

Very likely so.

GERMON.

She bore her misfortune with the utmost tranquillity, while everybody about her was in tears.

COUNT.

With tranquillity, sayest thou?

MARCHIONESS.

Whom are you talking about?

GERMON.

O madam, poor Nanine, she is going to be driven away, and everybody laments the loss of her.

MARCHIONESS.

To be driven away? how is this? I don't understand it: what! my little Nanine go! call her back

again: my charming orphan! what has she done, pray? why, Nanine was my present to you. O I remember, at ten years of age she delighted everybody that saw her: our baroness took her, and I said then she would be ill-used; I knew it would be so: but you never mind what I say; you will do everything of your own head: but let me tell you, turning Nanine out of doors thus is a very bad action.

COUNT.

Alone, on foot, without money, without assistance!

GERMON.

O sir, I forgot to tell you: an old man asked after you below, and says he wants to speak to you on an affair of importance, which he can communicate to none but yourself: he wants to throw himself at your feet.

COUNT.

In my present unhappy situation of mind, am I fit to converse with anybody?

MARCHIONESS.

You are uneasy enough, I believe, child, and so am I, too, to drive away poor Nanine, and make up a marriage which you knew would be disagreeable to me: come, it was not a wise thing: in three months' time you will be weary of one another: I'll tell you what happened exactly like this to my cousin the Marquis of Marmure: his wife was as sour as verjuice, though, by the by, yours is worse; when they married, they thought they loved one another, and in two months after they were parted. My lady went to live with her gallant, a foolish, sharking, extravagant fop; and my lord took a vile, tricking, ridiculous coquette! fine suppers, country

houses, horses, clothes, a rascally steward, new trinkets bought on trust, lawyers, contracts, interest-money, all together soon ruined them, and in two years both went together to the hospital. O, and now I think of it, I remember another story, more tragical, and more extraordinary than the other, it was of a—

COUNT.

My dear mother, we must go in to dinner: come —could I ever have suspected such infidelity!

MARCHIONESS.

'Tis really dreadful: but I'll tell it you all at table: in proper time and place, son, it may be of great use to you. Away.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

NANINE, *clothed as a country girl,* GERMON.

GERMON.

We are all in tears at the thought of losing you.

NANINE.

It is time to go: I've staid too long already.

GERMON.

But you won't leave us forever, I hope, and in this dress, too?

NANINE.

Obscurity was my first condition.

GERMON.

What a change! and only from this morning: to suffer is nothing, but to be degraded is terrible.

NANINE.

No, no, there are a thousand times worse misfortunes.

GERMON.

I admire your patience and humility; surely my master must have been ill-advised: our baroness has certainly abused her power: she must have done you this injury, the count could never have the heart.

NANINE.

I am indebted to him for everything; and, if he thinks fit to banish me, I must submit; his favors are his own, and he has a right to recall them.

GERMON.

Who would ever have expected such a change? what do you intend to do with yourself?

NANINE.

To retire, and repent.

GERMON.

How we shall all detest the baroness!

NANINE.

They have made me miserable, but I forgive them.

GERMON.

But what shall I tell my master from you when you are gone?

NANINE.

Tell him, I thank him for restoring me to my

former condition: tell him that, forever sensible of his goodness, I shall forget nothing but his—cruelty.

GERMON.

You melt my very soul; I could leave this house immediately to go along with you wherever you went: but Blaise is beforehand with us all: he will go and live with you, and we are all ready to follow him.

NANINE.

No, Germon, that I'm sure you are not. O Germon, to be driven out in this manner—and by whom?

GERMON.

The devil is certainly at the bottom of this business: you are leaving us, and my master is going to be married.

NANINE.

Married, sayest thou? indeed? nay, then let us be gone: O he was too dangerous for me—farewell.

GERMON.

Well! after all, my master must have a cruel heart, to banish so sweet a creature: she seems a most amiable girl, but in this world one should swear to nothing.

SCENE II.

THE COUNT, GERMON.

COUNT.

Well, is she gone at last?

GERMON.

Yes, sir, 'tis done.

COUNT.

I'm glad of it.

GERMON.

Then, sir, you have a heart of iron.

COUNT.

Did Philip Hombert meet and give her his hand?

GERMON.

What Philip Hombert, sir? alas! sir, poor Nanine went off without a creature to give her his hand; she would not even accept of mine.

COUNT.

And where is she gone?

GERMON.

That I know not; most probably to her friends.

COUNT.

Ay, at Remival, I suppose.

GERMON.

Yes, I believe she went that road.

COUNT.

Go, Germon, immediately, and conduct her to that convent where the baroness was going this morning, I'll lodge her in that safe retreat: these hundred louis d'ors will secure her reception; carry them to her, but take care she does not know they come from me: tell her 'tis a present from my mother: on no account mention my name to her.

GERMON.

Very well, sir, I shall obey your orders.

[*He goes towards the door.*

COUNT.

Germon, you saw her as she went off?

GERMON.

I did, sir.

COUNT.

Did she seem dejected? did she weep?

GERMON.

She behaved still better, sir; a few tears dropped from her, but she strove as much as she could to repress them.

COUNT.

Did she let fall anything that betrayed her sentiments? did you remark—

GERMON.

What, sir?

COUNT.

Did she say anything of me?

GERMON.

Yes, sir; a great deal.

COUNT.

Tell me, then, rascal, what did she say?

GERMON.

That you were her master, her best and kindest benefactor; that she shall forget everything—but your cruelty.

COUNT.

Away—be sure you take care she never returns; [*Germon going out*] and hark'ee, Germon.

GERMON.

Sir.

COUNT.

One word more: remember, if, by chance, as you are conducting her, one Philip Hombert should follow you, that you treat him in a proper manner.

GERMON.

O, sir, I'll use him most politely, and treat him with a good drubbing, that you may depend on: I'll do the business honestly, I warrant you: young Hombert, you say?

COUNT.

The same.

GERMON.

Very well: I have not the honor to know him, but the first man I see will I trim most heartily, and afterwards make him tell me his name. [*He goes towards the door and comes back.*] This young Hombert, I'll lay my life, is some lover of hers, a beau, a prig, I suppose, the cock of the village. Let me alone to deal with him.

COUNT.

Do as I bid you, and immediately.

GERMON.

I thought there was some lover in the case—and Blaise, too, puts in his claim, I suppose. Ay: they always love their equals better than their masters.

COUNT.

Begone, I tell you.

SCENE III.

THE COUNT.

[*Alone.*

He's in the right, and has hit on the true cause of my unhappiness, but I shall myself be the punisher of my own folly. I must now marry the baroness; it is determined, and I can't avoid it: 'tis dreadful; but I have deserved it; 'twill at least be a convenient match: she's not very tractable indeed, but every man may rule, if he has a mind to it; and he who has resolution may, at any time, be master in his own house.

SCENE IV.

THE COUNT, BARONESS, MARCHIONESS.

MARCHIONESS.

Well, son, you are going to marry this lady here?

COUNT.

Yes, madam.

MARCHIONESS.

This night she is to be your wife and my daughter-in-law?

BARONESS.

If you approve of it, madam; I suppose I shall have your consent.

MARCHIONESS.

Why, I must give it, I think: but to-morrow I shall take my leave of you.

COUNT.

Your leave, madam, why so?

MARCHIONESS.

I shall take my Nanine with me: since you have thought fit to turn her out of doors, I shall take her under my protection: I have a match in my eye for her: I propose marrying her to the young chief justice, nephew to the attorney-general, Jean Roc Souci; he whose father met with that comical adventure at Corbeil; you must have heard of him: yes, I will take care of this poor child, I'm determined: she is a jewel, and deserves to be well set. I'll marry her off immediately. Your servant.

COUNT.

My dear mother, don't be in a passion: leave me to manage my own affairs, and let Nanine go into a convent.

BARONESS.

Indeed, madam, you may believe us, such a girl as Nanine is not fit to go into a family.

MARCHIONESS.

Ha! why, what's the matter?

BARONESS.

O a little affair only.

MARCHIONESS.

But pray—

BARONESS.

O nothing at all.

MARCHIONESS.

Nothing! a great deal, I'm afraid: I understand you mighty well: some little indiscretion I suppose:

nothing more likely, for to be sure, she's very handsome. Ay, ay, we are all frail; we tempt, and are tempted; the heart has its weakness: young girls are always a little coquettish: but come, it is not so bad as you make it; tell me fairly, what my poor child has done?

COUNT.

I tell you, madam?

MARCHIONESS.

You seem, after all, at the bottom to have some regard for the girl, and perhaps you may—

SCENE V.

THE COUNT, MARCHIONESS, BARONESS, MARIN. [*Booted.*

MARIN.

I've done it, sir; it's all agreed for.

MARCHIONESS.

What's agreed for?

BARONESS.

Ay, what, sir, what?

MARIN.

Why, sir, I've done as you ordered me, spoke to the tradesmen, and you'll have your equipage to-morrow.

BARONESS.

What equipage?

MARIN.

Everything, madam, that your future spouse had ordered: six fine horses, and a charming berlin; I'm

sure your ladyship will like it; it's very fine; the panels all varnished by Martin: the diamonds, too, are brilliant, and well-chosen; and the new stuffs quite in taste.—O nothing comes up to them.

BARONESS.

[*To the count.*

And had you ordered all this?

COUNT.

I had—[*Aside*] but for whom!

MARIN.

Everything will come to-morrow morning in the coach, and will be ready for your wedding in the evening: O there's nothing like Paris for getting everything at a minute's warning, if you have but money. As I came back, I called on the lawyer; he's just by, finishing your affair.

BARONESS.

It has hung a long time in suspense.

MARCHIONESS.

[*Aside.*

I wish it would hang these forty years.

MARIN.

In the hall I met a poor old man, sighing and in tears; he has waited a long time, he says, and begs to speak to you.

BARONESS.

An impertinent fellow! let him go about his business: he has chosen the wrong time to trouble us now.

MARCHIONESS.

Why, so, madam? have a little consideration: son,

let me tell you, it's very wrong to repulse poor people in this manner; I have told you over and over, when you were a child, you ought to treat them with indulgence; hear what they have to say; be courteous, and affable to them: are not they men as well as yourself? we don't know perhaps whom we affront, and may repent our hardness of heart: the proud never prosper. [*To Marin.*] Go, see to that old man.

MARIN.

I will, ma'am. [*He goes out.*]

COUNT.

Forgive me, madam, my respects are always due to you, and I am ready to see this man, in spite of my present embarrassment.

SCENE VI.

THE COUNT, MARCHIONESS, BARONESS, A PEASANT.

MARCHIONESS.

[*To the Peasant.*

Come, come, speak, don't be afraid.

PEASANT.

O my lord, for heaven's sake, hear me; permit me to fall at your feet, and to give you back—

COUNT.

Rise, friend; I'il not be knelt to; do not imagine me capable of such pride: you seem to be an honest man, do you want employment in my family? who are you?

MARCHIONESS.

Cheer up, man.

PEASANT.

Alas! sir, I am the father of—**Nanine.**

COUNT.

You?

BARONESS.

Your daughter's a slut.

PEASANT.

This, sir, is what I feared: this is the cruel stroke that has wounded my poor heart: I thought indeed so much money could not fairly belong to one in her condition: we little folks soon lose our integrity when we come among the great.

BARONESS.

There he's right enough: but still he's a deceiver, for Nanine is not his daughter, she was an orphan.

PEASANT.

It is too true, she was so: I left her with her poor relatives in her infant years, having lost her mother, with all my fortune; obliged by necessity, I went to serve abroad; and as I would not have her pass for the daughter of a soldier, forbade her ever to mention my name.

MARCHIONESS.

Why so? for my part, I respect a soldier: we stand in need of them sometimes.

COUNT.

What is there shameful in the profession?

PEASANT.

It meets indeed with less honor than it deserves.

COUNT.

The prejudice against them is inexcusable. I own, I esteem an honest soldier, who hazards his life in the defence of his king and country, much more than an important, self-sufficient scoundrel, whose knavish industry sucks up the blood of his fellow subjects.

MARCHIONESS.

You must have been in a great many battles: let me have an account of them all; I long to hear it.

PEASANT.

In my present unhappy condition you must excuse me: let it suffice to inform you, that I received a thousand promises of advancement; but, without friends, how was it possible to rise? thrown amongst the common crowd, all I could do was to distinguish myself, and honor my only reward.

MARCHIONESS.

You were then well-born?

BARONESS.

Fie: how can you think so! well-born indeed!

PEASANT.

No, madam: but I was born of honest parents, and merited—a better daughter.

MARCHIONESS.

Could you have had a better?

COUNT.

Well! go on.

MARCHIONESS.

A better than Nanine?

COUNT.

Prithee, go on.

PEASANT.

My daughter, I understood, was brought up here, and treated in the kindest manner; I thought myself happy, and blessed heaven for your goodness, and paternal care of her; I came to the neighboring village, full of hopes and fears; I own I trembled for her dangerous youth; and, by this lady's intimation, find I had but too much reason; it has shocked me to the soul; but I thought a hundred louis d'ors, besides diamonds, was a treasure too great to be fairly come by: she could never be mistress of them, but at the expense of her innocence: the bare suspicion makes me shudder; if it be so, I shall die with grief and shame: but I came as soon as possible, to give them you back again: they are yours, therefore, I beseech you, take them: if my daughter is to blame, punish me, but don't ruin her.

MARCHIONESS.

O my dear son, I cannot bear this; it overpowers me.

BARONESS.

What is all this? a dream? a trick?

COUNT.

O what have I done?

PEASANT.

[*Taking out the purse and the letter.*

Here, sir, take them.

COUNT.

I take them! no: they were given to her, and she

has made a noble use of them: was it to you, then, the message was delivered? who brought it?

PEASANT.

Your gardener, sir, in whom Nanine ventured to confide.

COUNT.

Was it directed to you?

PEASANT.

It was, I own it, sir.

COUNT.

O grief! O tenderness! what excess of virtue in them both! but now your name?—O I am lost, distracted.

MARCHIONESS.

Ay, your name. What mystery is this?

PEASANT.

Philip Hombert de Gatine.

COUNT.

O my father!

BARONESS.

What does he say?

COUNT.

How day breaks in upon me! I have done wrong, and I must make amends for it: O if you knew how culpable I have been! I have injured the sublimest virtue. [*He steps aside, and speaks to one of his servants.*] away: fly.

BARONESS.

What is all this emotion for?

COUNT.

My coach immediately.

MARCHIONESS.

Now, madam, you must be her protectress: when we have done such an injury, we should blush at nothing so much as an imperfect repentance; my son often has his whims, which people are too apt to mistake for unpardonable follies; but at bottom he has a generous soul, and is naturally good; I can do what I please with him: you, my daughter-in-law, are not so well-disposed.

BARONESS.

I shall grow out of all patience: how confused and thoughtful he looks! what strange scheme now is he meditating upon? well, sir, what do you intend to do?

MARCHIONESS.

Ay, for Nanine?

BARONESS.

Make her a handsome present, and satisfy her.

MARCHIONESS.

That will be the least we can do.

BARONESS.

But as to seeing her that I never will: she shall not come nigh the castle: do you hear me?

COUNT.

Yes, I hear you.

MARCHIONESS.

[*Aside.*

What a heart of stone!

BARONESS.

Don't give my suspicions cause to break out, sir. Ha! you hesitate.

COUNT.

[*After a pause of some time.*

No, madam, I am resolved.

BARONESS.

That respect at least is owing to me; nay, to both of us.

MARCHIONESS.

And can you be so cruel, son?

BARONESS.

What step do you propose to take?

COUNT.

'Tis taken already: you know my heart, madam, and the frankness of it: I must be plain with you: I had promised you my hand; but the design of our marriage was only to put an end to a tedious law-suit between us, which I will now do immediately, by willingly resigning to you all those rights and pretensions which were the foundation of it: even the interest shall be yours; I give up everything, take, and enjoy it: if we cannot be man and wife, let us at least live as friends and relatives: let everything that gave mutual uneasiness be forgotten; there is no reason why, because we can't love, we should hate each other.

BARONESS.

Your falsehood is what I expected: but I renounce your presents, and yourself: yes, traitor, I see now who you mean to live with, and how low your pas-

sion sinks you: go, and be a slave to her, I leave you to your unworthy choice.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE VII.

THE COUNT, MARCHIONESS, PHILIP HOMBERT.

COUNT.

No, madam, 'tis not unworthy, my soul is not blinded by an idle passion: that virtue which it is my duty to reward ought to melt, but cannot debase me: what they call meanness in this old man constitutes his merit, and makes him truly noble: if I would be so, I must pay the price of it: where souls are thus ennobled by themselves, and distinguished by superior characters, we should pass over common rules: their birth, low as it is, when attended with such virtues, will make my family but more illustrious.

MARCHIONESS.

What are you talking about?

SCENE VIII.

THE COUNT, MARCHIONESS, NANINE, PHILIP HOMBERT.

COUNT.

[*To his mother.*

Look at her, and guess.

MARCHIONESS.

[*To Nanine.*

My dearest child, come to my arms: but she is strangely clothed, and yet how handsome she looks, and modest too!

NANINE.

[*Pays her respects to the Marchioness, and then runs to her father.*

O nature demands my first acknowledgments, my dear father!

PHILIP HOMBERT.

O heaven! my daughter! O sir, you have made me amends for forty years' afflictions.

COUNT.

Ay, but how must I repair the injury I have done to such exalted virtue! to come back in this dress, how mean it is, but she adorns it; Nanine does honor to everything: speak, my Nanine, can your goodness pardon the affront?

NANINE.

Can you, sir, doubt my forgiveness of it? I never thought, after all your bounty to me, you could injure me.

COUNT.

If you have indeed forgotten the wrong I did you, give me a proof of it: once more, and only once, I take upon me to command you; but this once you must swear—to obey me.

PHILIP HOMBERT.

I am sure she owes it to you, and her gratitude—

NANINE.

[*To her father.*

He need not doubt, sir, of my obedience.

COUNT.

I shall depend on it: let me tell you then, that all your duty is not yet paid: I have seen you on your knees to my mother, and to your own father; one thing still remains for you, and that is, now, before them, to embrace—your husband.

NANINE.

Who? I?

MARCHIONESS.

Are you in earnest? can it be?

PHILIP HOMBERT.

O my child!

COUNT.

[*To his mother.*

By your permission, madam.

MARCHIONESS.

My dear child, the family will be in a strange uproar about it.

COUNT.

O when they see Nanine, they must approve.

PHILIP HOMBERT.

What a stroke of fortune! O sir, I never thought you could descend thus low.

COUNT.

You promised to obey, and I must have it so.

MARCHIONESS.

My son.

COUNT.

My happiness, madam, depends on this important moment: interest alone, we know, has made a thousand marriages; we have seen the wisest men consult fortune and character only: her character is irreproachable; and as to fortune, she wants it not: justice and inclination shall do what avarice has so often done before: let me, then, madam, have your consent, and finish all.

NANINE.

No, madam, you must not consent; indeed you must not; oppose his passion, oppose mine: let me entreat you, do: love has blinded him, do you, madam, remove the veil: let me live far from him, and at a distance only adore his virtues: you know my condition; you see my father: can I, ought I, ever to wish to call you mother?

MARCHIONESS.

Yes; you can, you ought: it is enough: I can hold out no longer: this last generosity has entirely subdued me: it tells me how much I ought to love: it is as singular, as extraordinary, as Nanine herself.

NANINE.

Then, madam, I obey; my heart can no longer resist the power of love.

MARCHIONESS.

Let this happy day be the worthy recompense of virtue, but let it not be made a precedent.

End of the Third and Last Act.

THE PRUDE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Mme. de Dorfise, a Widow.
Mme. de Burlet, her Cousin.
Collette, Chambermaid to Dorfise.
Blandford, Captain of a Ship.
Darmin, his Friend.
Bartolin, a Cashier.
Mondor, a Coxcomb.
Adine, Niece to Darmin, and disguised like a young Turk.

SCENE Marseilles.

This comedy is partly imitated from an English piece, called the Plain Dealer. It does not suit very well for the French stage; the manners are too rough and bold, though much less so than in the original. The English seem to take too much liberty, and the French too little.

T. S.

THE PRUDE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

DARMIN, ADINE.

ADINE.

[*Dressed like a Turk.*

O my dear uncle, what a cruel voyage! what dangers have we run! and then my dress and appearance, too: still must I conceal under this turban my sex, my name, and the secret of my foolish heart.

DARMIN.

At last we are returned safe: in good truth, niece, I pity you; but, your father dying consul in Greece, both of us left, as we were after his death, without money or friends; your youth, beauty and accomplishments but so many dangerous advantages; and, to crown all our misfortunes, that wicked pasha desperately in love with you; what was to be done? you were obliged to disguise yourself, and make your escape as soon as possible.

ADINE.

Alas! I have yet other dangers to encounter.

DARMIN.

Dear girl, be composed, nor blush at what can't be prevented; embarking with me in such a hurry, and forced to disguise yourself in that manner, you could not with any decency resume your sex on board a ship before a hundred sailors, who were more to be

feared than your old debauched pasha; but happily for us, everything has turned out well, and we are safely arrived at Marseilles, out of the reach of amorous pashas, near your friends and relatives, amongst Frenchmen, and good sort of people.

ADINE.

Blandford is certainly an honest man: but how dearly will his virtues cost me! that I should be forced to return with him!

DARMIN.

Your deceased father designed you for him: he had set his heart on that match when you were but a child.

ADINE.

There he was deceived.

DARMIN.

Blandford, my dear, when he is better acquainted with you, will do justice to your charms: he can never be long attached to a prude, who makes it her perpetual study to deceive and impose upon him.

ADINE.

They say she is handsome: he is constant in his nature, and will always love her.

DARMIN.

Constant! who is so, in love, child?

ADINE.

I am afraid of Dorfise.

DARMIN.

She has too much intrigue about her: her prudery, they say, has a little too much gallantry in it: her

heart is false, and her tongue scandalous; never fear her, my girl, deceit can last only for a time.

ADINE.

Ay, but that time may be long, very long: the thought makes me miserable: Dorfise deceives him, and Dorfise has found the way to please.

DARMIN.

But, after all, niece, has Blandford really got so far into your heart?

ADINE.

He has, indeed; ever since that day, when the two Algerine vessels attacked us with such violence: O how I trembled for him! I think verily I was as much frightened for him as for you; I wished to be a man, indeed, that I might have defended him: don't you remember, uncle, it was Blandford alone who saved us when our ship was on fire? good heaven! how I admired his courage, and his virtues! they are deeply engraved in my heart, and never to be effaced.

DARMIN.

A grateful heart cannot but be prejudiced in favor of such distinguished virtue. I don't so much wonder at your choice: fine eyes, a noble demeanor, a good shape, and scarce thirty years of age, these are great recommendations to his—virtue: but then his strange humor and austerity can surely never be agreeable to you.

ADINE.

Why not? I am naturally serious myself, and perhaps in him may be fond even of my own faults.

DARMIN.

He hates the world.

ADINE.

They say he has reason.

DARMIN.

His temper is too easy and complying, he relies too much on others, and is too generous; and then his moroseness makes his freedom disagreeable.

ADINE.

The greatest fault he has, in my opinion, is his passion for Dorfise.

DARMIN.

That's too true; why, then, won't you endeavor to open his eyes, disabuse him, and shine in your true character?

ADINE.

How is it possible to shine in any character till we are able to please? alas! from the first day he took us both on board, I have been afraid he should discover me, and now I am on shore I have still the same apprehensions.

DARMIN.

I had intended to discover you to him myself.

ADINE.

For heaven's sake, don't; but join with me in my design upon him: sacrificed as I am to the adored Dorfise, I would wish to remain still unknown to him, and would have him continue a stranger to that victim which he offers up to love.

DARMIN.

What then is your design?

ADINE.

This very night to retire to a convent, and avoid

the sight of an ungrateful man whom I cannot help loving.

DARMIN.

Indeed, niece, those who go to a convent in haste, generally live to repent it at leisure: I tell you, child, time will do all things: in the meanwhile, a more dreadful misfortune calls for our attention: the very instant that this new Du-Gué so nobly got off his ship, both his fortune and mine went to the bottom: we are both involved in the same calamity, and have come to Marseilles full of hope, but without a shilling! and must therefore look out for some immediate assistance: love, my dear niece, is not always the only thing to be thought of.

ADINE.

There, uncle, I differ from you; when you are in love, I think it is.

DARMIN.

Time will open your eyes: love, my dear, at your age is blind, but not at mine; and where there is no fortune, and nothing but grief and poverty with it, it has very few charms; only the rich and happy should be in love.

ADINE.

You think, then, my dear uncle, that now you are in distress you can have no mistress; and that your widow Burlet will forsake you as soon as she knows your circumstances.

DARMIN.

My distress perhaps may serve her for an excuse; such, my dear, is the custom of the world; but I have other cares to afflict me: I want money, and that's the most pressing calamity.

SCENE II.

BLANDFORD, DARMIN, ADINE.

BLANDFORD.

So! so! in the age we live in everything may be had of everybody but money: what a heap of close embraces, kisses, fulsome compliments, false oaths, joyous welcomes, have I received from this whole city! but no sooner were they acquainted with my distress than every soul forsook me: such is this world.

DARMIN.

It is indeed a base one: but your friends come in search of you?

BLANDFORD.

Friends? know you any such? I have looked for them, and have found a number of scoundrels of every rank and degree: I have found honest men, too, that live in the bosom of indolence and plenty, like their own marbles, hard, polished, and always wrapped up in themselves, and their own interests; but worthy hearts, elevated souls, who were not the slaves of fortune, such as take a generous pleasure in relieving the unhappy, these, Darmin, I have seldom, very seldom met with: there is naught but vice and corruption on every side: Mammon is the god of this world; and I wish with all my heart, that all mankind had sunk with our vessel, and was buried in the waves.

DARMIN.

Be so good as to except me from your general sentence.

ADINE.

The world, I do believe, is false: and yet I think there is in it still a heart worthy of you; a heart that can boast of courage with sensibility, and strength with softness; which would resent the unkind treatment you have met with, by loving you, if possible, but the more for it: tender in its vows, and constant in its attachment to you.

BLANDFORD.

Invaluable treasure! but where is it to be found?

ADINE.

In me.

BLANDFORD.

In thee! away, deceitful boy, am I in a condition, think you, to listen to such idle tales? prithee, young man, choose a fitter time to jest in: yes, even in this world, I know there are pure and uncorrupted hearts, who will cherish my misfortune, and pity my distress: even in this low condition I have the happiness to reflect, that Dorfise at least knows how to love and to distinguish virtue.

ADINE.

Dorfise then is the idol of your heart?

BLANDFORD.

She is.

ADINE.

You have tried and proved her then?

BLANDFORD.

I have.

DARMIN.

My late brother, before he went to Greece, if I remember aright, designed my niece for you.

BLANDFORD.

Your late brother, my friend, made a bad choice then: I have made a much better: I have determined in favor of that virtue which, banished from the world, hath taken up its residence in the breast of my Dorfise.

ADINE.

Merit like hers is rare indeed; I am astonished at it, but, great as it is, it cannot equal her happiness.

BLANDFORD.

This youth is of a noble nature, and I love him; he takes my part even against you.

DARMIN.

Not so much perhaps as you think: but pray tell me, how happened it that this Dorfise, with all her attachment and love for you, never wrote to you for a whole year?

BLANDFORD.

Would you have had her write to me through the air, or the post travel by sea? I have received large packets from her before now, letters written in such a style too—so much truth, so much good sense, nothing affected, embarrassed, or obscure, no false wit, nothing but the language of nature and the heart; such is the effect of real love.

DARMIN.

[*To Adine.*

You turn pale.

BLANDFORD.

[*Looking earnestly at Adine.*

What's the matter with you?

ADINE.

With me, sir? O sir, I have got a sad pain at my heart.

BLANDFORD.

[*To Darmin.*

His heart! and what a tone, too! a girl of his age would have more strength and courage: I love the lad, but am astonished at his effeminacy: he was never made for such a voyage; he's afraid of the sea, the enemy, and every wind that blows: I caught him one day sitting down to a looking-glass: he appears to be cut out for the gay world, to sit in a box at a playhouse and admire his fine form, which he seems to be mightily enamored with: 'tis a very Narcissus.

DARMIN.

He has beauty.

BLANDFORD.

Ay, but he should beware of vanity.

ADINE.

You need not fear, sir, 'tis not myself that I admire: I am more likely to hate myself, I assure you; I love nothing that resembles me.

BLANDFORD.

Dorfise, my friend, is after all the mistress of my fate: convinced as I have long been of her prudence, I gave her a promise of marriage; at parting I left everything I had in her possession: jewels, notes. contracts, ready money, all, thank heaven, have I frankly trusted to my dear Dorfise; and her I consigned to the virtue of my friend, M. Bartolin.

DARMIN.

What! Bartolin the cashier?

BLANDFORD.

The same; a good friend, who esteems me, and whom I love.

DARMIN.

[*In an ironical tone.*

To be sure you have made an excellent choice, and are extremely happy in a mistress and a friend: not at all prejudiced.

BLANDFORD.

Not in the least: I am impatient at their absence, and long to see them.

ADINE.

[*Aside.*

I can bear it no longer: I must go.

BLANDFORD.

You seem disordered.

ADINE.

Everyone has some misfortunes or other; mine are heavy indeed, they overpower me, but they will cease—with Blandford's.

[*She goes out.*

BLANDFORD.

I know not why, but this grief affects me.

DARMIN.

'Tis an amiable youth, and seems wonderfully attached to you.

BLANDFORD.

Blandford's heart is not a bad one, and what fortune I have, howsoever small it be, shall be in common with us both; as soon as Dorfise returns me the money I left with her, your young Adine shall

have a part of it: I wish his voice was a little more masculine, and his air more easy: but time and care must form the manners of youth: he is modest, sensible, and has just notions of right and wrong. I observed through the whole voyage, that he would blush at any indecent expression which my people made use of on board: I promise you I shall endeavor to be a father to him.

DARMIN.

That's not what he wants of you; but come, let us go immediately to Dorfise, at least we shall get your money of her.

BLANDFORD.

True; but that unlucky demon which always accompanies me, has contrived to keep her in the country still.

DARMIN.

Well, but the cashier—

BLANDFORD.

The cashier is there, too; but they will both come to town as soon as they know I am here.

DARMIN.

You are satisfied then that Mme. Dorfise is always devoted to your service.

BLANDFORD.

Why should she not be? if I keep my faith to her, surely she may do the same by me; I have not been so foolish, as, like you, to throw away my heart on a gay coquette.

DARMIN.

It may happen that I shall find myself despised, but that you know every man is liable to; I will own

to you, her airy, trifling humor is very different from that of her wise cousin.

BLANDFORD.

But what will you do with a heart so—

DARMIN.

Nothing at all: I shall hold my tongue, till our two fair idols make their appearance at Marseilles: apropos, here comes our friend Mondor.

BLANDFORD.

Our friend? said you! he our friend?

DARMIN.

His head no doubt is a little of the lightest, but at the bottom he is a worthy character.

BLANDFORD.

Prithee, undeceive thyself, dear Darmin, and be assured that friendship requires a firmer mind than his; fools are incapable of love.

DARMIN.

But the wise man, does he love so much then? come, we may reap some advantage from this fool notwithstanding; as the case now stands with us, there will be no harm in borrowing his money.

SCENE III.

BLANDFORD, DARMIN, MONDOR.

MONDOR.

Morrow, morrow, my dears; so you are still in the land of the living: I'm glad of it, glad of it, with

all my heart: good morrow to you; but pray, who is that pretty boy I saw in t'other room? whence comes he? did he come over with you? what is he, Turk, Greek, your son, your page, what do you do with him? where do you sup to-night, ha? boys, where do you throw your handkerchiefs? what! are you going post to Versailles to give an account of your battles? have you got ever a patron here?

BLANDFORD.

No.

MONDOR.

What, never made your bows at court?

BLANDFORD.

No: I made my bows at sea; my services are my patrons; the only artifices I make use of; I never was at court in my life.

MONDOR.

Then you never got anything.

BLANDFORD.

I never asked it; I wait till the master's eye in its own time shall find me out.

MONDOR.

Yes: and these fine sentiments will carry you, as they do everybody else, at their own time, to jail.

DARMIN.

We are pretty near it already, for our honor and glory has not left us a shilling.

MONDOR.

I am inclined to think so.

DARMIN.

Dear knight, let us fairly confess to you—

MONDOR.

In two words I must inform you—

DARMIN.

That our friend here has had a terrible loss—

MONDOR.

That I have made, my dear, a discovery—

DARMIN.

Of all his fortune—

MONDOR.

Of a famous beauty—

DARMIN.

Which he was carrying—

MONDOR.

To whom without vanity—

DARMIN.

By sea—

MONDOR.

After a good deal of mysterious conduct—

DARMIN.

In his ship—

MONDOR.

I have the happiness to be well with.

DARMIN.

This, sir, is a misfortune—

MONDOR.

O 'tis a most enchanting pleasure to conquer these excessive scruples, to get the better of that modesty, that fierce angry preceptor who is always thwarting and scolding at nature: I had once an inclination for Lady Burlet, for her gayety, and those pretty light airs she gives herself; but that was a foolish taste, as foolish as herself.

DARMIN.

I'm glad to hear it.

MONDOR.

O no, 'tis the prude I dote on: encouraged by the difficulty, I presented my apple to the beauty.

DARMIN.

Ay, sir, this prude, who has captivated your heart, this proud beauty is—

MONDOR.

Dorfise.

BLANDFORD.

[*Laughing.*

Dorfise! is it? O you know, I suppose, whom you are speaking to?

MONDOR.

To you, my friend.

BLANDFORD.

I pity thy folly, young man, and shall take care that, for the future, this lady shall never encourage such sparks as you.

MONDOR.

Very well, my dear: but let me tell you——your wise woman never complains when she is taken by a fool.

BLANDFORD.

Be so kind, however, my friend, as to play the fool no longer with her, for know, her virtues are destined to make me happy; she is mine, and has promised to marry me; she waits with impatience till we are united.

MONDOR.

[*Laughing.*

The pretty note that my friend, Blandford, has there! [*To Darmin*] you say he wants a few more in his distress; here, Darmin.

[*He is going to give him a pocketbook.*

BLANDFORD.

[*Stopping Darmin.*

Stay, take care, Darmin.

DARMIN.

Why, you would not—

BLANDFORD.

From him I would not—receive anything; when I do any man the favor to borrow of him, it shall be one whom I think worthy of it; it shall be a friend.

MONDOR.

And am not I your friend?

BLANDFORD.

No, sir: a friend indeed? an excellent friend who wants to run away with my wife; a friend who this very night perhaps would entertain twenty coxcombs at my expense: O I know them well; these fashionable friends, these friends of the world.

MONDOR.

That world, sir, which you grumble at, is better than all your ill-humor. Your servant, sir. I am going this moment to the fair Dorfise, to split my sides with laughing at your folly.

[*Is going off.*

BLANDFORD.

[*Stopping him.*

What say you, sir? Darmin, how is this? can Dorfise be here?

MONDOR.

Most assuredly.

BLANDFORD.

O heaven!

MONDOR.

And pray what is there in that so wonderful?

BLANDFORD

In her own house?

MONDOR.

Yes, I tell you, at Marseilles; I met her just as I came in, returning in a violent hurry from the country.

BLANDFORD.

[*Aside.*

To meet me! thank heaven! now all my sorrows are past: come, I'll go, and see her.

MONDOR.

Done: with all my heart: the more fools there are, the more one laughs.

BLANDFORD.

[*Going to the door.*

I'll rap.

MONDOR.

Rap away.

COLLETTE.

[*In the house.*

Who's there?

BLANDFORD.

'Tis I.

MONDOR.

'Tis I myself.

SCENE IV.

BLANDFORD, DARMIN, COLLETTE, MONDOR.

COLLETTE.

[*Coming out of the house.*

Blandford! Darmin! amazing: lord, sir——

BLANDFORD.

Collette!

COLLETTE.

Bless me, sir, I thought you had been drowned long ago; you're welcome, sir.

BLANDFORD.

No, Collette; just heaven, propitious to my love, preserved me, that I might once more see thy dear mistress.

COLLETTE.

She is this moment gone out, sir.

DARMIN.

And her cousin, too?

COLLETTE.

Yes, sir, her cousin has gone along with her.

BLANDFORD.

But where, for heaven's sake, is she gone? where must I find her?

COLLETTE.

[*Making a prudish curtsy.*

At the—assembly.

BLANDFORD.

What assembly?

COLLETTE.

Lord, sir, you are mighty ignorant: you must know, sir, there are about twenty ladies of fashion most intimately connected to reform the age, to correct our foolish young women, to substitute in the room of that scandal which now prevails a prudent modesty and reserve, and Mme. Dorfise is at the head of the party.

BLANDFORD.

[*To Darmin.*

But how happens it, Darmin, that such a coxcomb as this should be suffered by so rigid, so severe a beauty?

DARMIN.

O prudes love coxcombs.

BLANDFORD.

Where does she go from the assembly?

COLLETTE.

That I can't tell: to do good in secret, I suppose.

BLANDFORD.

Secretly! that's the height of virtue; but when may I, in my turn, speak with her at home?

MONDOR.

That, sir, you must ask me; and I believe I may venture to grant it you: you may see her, sir, as you used to do.

BLANDFORD.

Your business, sir, is to respect her, and take care that you say nothing to her prejudice.

DARMIN.

And her cousin, too, pray where is she to be found? I was told they lived together.

COLLETTE.

They do so: but their tastes are different, and they are seldom together. Mme. de Burlet, with ten or a dozen young fellows, and as many pretty women, entertains herself every day, keeps a plentiful table, and goes forever to the comedy: afterwards they dance, or play; always at her house you will meet with good suppers, new songs, and bons-mots, old wines red and white, ice-cream, liquors, new ribbons, Saxon monkeys, rich bagatelles, invented by Hebert for the use of the fine ladies day and night, pleasures succeeding pleasures; scarce is there a moment left even to scandalize one another.

MONDOR.

Ay, this, my friend, is the way to live.

DARMIN.

But whither must I follow her?

COLLETTE.

Everywhere; for she runs about from morning to night, and sees everything; plays, balls, music,

suppers; she is always employed: perhaps very late in the evening you may meet with her and her joyous companions at home, about supper-time.

BLANDFORD.

If, after what I have heard, you are fond of her, my friend, you must have as little understanding as herself; is it possible to love a woman, who has all the follies of her sex put together? to be sure, it will be worth your while to follow her chariot wheels, to dance after a coquette, and sigh and whine for a ridiculous creature who thinks of nothing but her pleasures.

DARMIN.

I may be mistaken, but I cannot help thinking that a love of pleasure, and the strictest honor, may be consistent with each other; and I am likewise of opinion, with all due deference to you be it spoken, that a prude, with all her severity of virtue, may do a great deal of good in public, and yet in secret is often good for—just nothing.

BLANDFORD.

Well, well! we shall be better judges by and by; you shall see my choice, and I yours.

MONDOR.

Ay, ay, by the time you return, my dears, the place will be taken.

BLANDFORD.

By whom, pray?

MONDOR.

By me.

BLANDFORD.

By you?

MONDOR.

I have made too good use of your absence to be afraid of your presence, I assure you: so fare you well.

SCENE V.

BLANDFORD, DARMIN.

BLANDFORD.

Well, what think you? can one be jealous of such a creature?

DARMIN.

O fools have fortune, you know: nothing more common.

BLANDFORD.

You can never imagine, surely—

DARMIN.

O yes: your sensible women are very fond of fools at times: but I must take my leave, to know my own fate, and see whether I am a happy or a forsaken lover.

[*He goes out.*

BLANDFORD.

[*Alone.*

Ay, ay, make haste, and get your dismissal: poor fellow! I pity him: how happy am I to have made choice of a woman worthy of my esteem! unfortunate as I have been, I have reason to bless the hour of my return: reason increases my passion: yes: I am resolved; I will leave the world, the whole ungrateful world, for one good and worthy woman. I have had enough of hopes and fears: the port at

length appears, and there will I shelter myself: what is all the world to this? a foolish, ridiculous, fatal world! ought I not to detest it? there is not a friend remaining in it; not a creature, who at the bottom really cares a farthing for one: O 'tis a vile world: if there is any love or affection to be expected, it must be from a wife; all the difficulty is how to choose one. A coquette is a monster one would avoid, but a beautiful, a tender, and a sensible woman, is the noblest work of nature.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

DORFISE, MME. DE BURLET, MONDOR.

DORFISE.

I must beg of you, M. Mondor, not to indulge yourself in this excessive familiarity: it is impossible for ears so chaste as mine to suffer such liberties.

MONDOR.

[*Laughing.*

And yet you like them: you rate me for my impertinence, but you listen to it: why, my dear, your hair is cut short on purpose, that you may hear the better.

DORFISE.

Again?

MME. DE BURLET.

Indeed I shall take his part: you are too rigid, and affect too much severity: liberty is not always licentiousness; there is nothing indecent, in my opinion,

in little sallies of innocent mirth and gayety, which we may choose whether we will understand or not; but your outrageous virtue would shut up our mouths and our ears together.

DORFISE.

I would indeed, cousin: and moreover, I would advise you to shut your doors, too, against some visitors whom I frequently see here; I have told you often enough, cousin, it will ruin your reputation: how can you suffer such a libertine crew? Cleon, that pretty fellow, who is very brilliant without a spark of wit, and is always laughing at the good things he would make you believe he has just said; Damon, who for twenty beauties that he is in love with, makes twenty madrigals as insipid as himself; and that Robin, who is always talking of himself, with the old pedant that makes every creature sick of him: then there's my cousin, too, that—

MONDOR.

Enough, enough, madam: let everybody speak in his turn; and since your ladyship shows so much good nature in speaking of the world, I will endeavor to convince you I have at least as much charity as yourself, and propose giving you in three words a picture of the whole city: to begin then with—

DORFISE.

Stop thy licentious tongue: none should dare to chastise vice but persons of the strictest virtue; I cannot bear to hear libertines satirizing others who are much less culpable than themselves; for my part, what I say is from my regard to the honor of human nature, and disgust of the world, this vile world: how I do hate it!

MME. DE BURLET.

For all that, cousin, it has some attractions.

DORFISE.

For you, I believe it has, and to your ruin.

MME. DE BURLET.

And has it none for you, cousin? do you really hate the world?

DORFISE.

Horribly.

MME. DE BURLET.

And all the pleasures of it?

DORFISE.

Abominably.

MME. DE BURLET.

Plays? balls?

MONDOR.

Music, dancing—

DORFISE.

O my dear, they are all the devil's inventions.

MME. DE BURLET.

But dress and finery? you must acknowledge——

DORFISE.

All vanity! O how I regret every minute thrown away at my toilette! I hate to look at myself; and, of all things in nature, detest a looking-glass.

MME. DE BURLET.

And yet, my dear rigid cousin, you seem tolerably well dressed.

DORFISE.

Do I?

MONDOR.

Extremely well.

DORFISE.

Plain, very plain.

MONDOR.

But with taste.

MME. DE BURLET.

You may say what you please, but your wise ladyship loves to please.

DORFISE.

I love to please? O heaven!

MME. DE BURLET.

Come, come, be honest; have you not some small inclination to this young rattle? he's not ill made.

[*Pointing to Mondor.*

MONDOR.

O fie!

MME. DE BURLET.

Young, rich, and handsome.

MONDOR.

Pooh, prithee.

DORFISE.

O abominable! a handsome young man is my aversion; handsome and young! O fie, fie!

MONDOR.

Upon my soul, madam, I am concerned for both of us; the wicked woman to talk so: but pray, madam, this Blandford, who is come back without his ship, is he so rich, and young, and handsome?

DORFISE.

Blandford? why, is he here?

MONDOR.

Certainly.

COLLETTE.

[*Entering hastily.*

O madam! I come to tell you—

DORFISE.

[*Whispering to Collette.*

Hark'ee.

MME. DE BURLET.

How's this?

DORFISE.

[*To Mondor.*

I thought since he took his leave of me he had been cured of all his faults; to tell you the truth, I imagined he was dead long ago.

MONDOR.

No, madam, he is alive, I assure you: the pirate intends to sink me at once: he pretends to be a favorite of yours.

DORFISE.

[*Aside to Collette.*

O Collette!

COLLETTE.

O madam!

DORFISE.

[*To Mondor.*

Dear sir, can't you find out some means of sending him to sea again?

MONDOR.

O yes: with all my heart.

MME. DE BURLET.

Pray, sir, is there any news of his intimate friend and confidant, Darmin? has he arrived?

MONDOR.

He has, madam: the captain it seems fell in with him at some port or other: they have had a battle at sea, and now are returned home without a stiver; Blandford has brought with him a little Greek, too, the handsomest, genteelest—

DORFISE.

O yes: I believe I saw him just by my house: large black eyes?

MONDOR.

The same.

DORFISE.

Penetrating, yet full of softness: rosy cheeks?

MONDOR.

He has so.

DORFISE.

Fine hair, and teeth: something in his air that's noble and fine?

MONDOR.

The very paragon of nature.

DORFISE.

If his morals are good; if he is well-born and discreet, I'll see him: you shall bring him to me—though he is young.

MME. DE BURLET.

I must find out Darmin's lodging as soon as possible: here, la Fleur, go this minute and carry him

these five hundred pounds, [*she gives a purse to la Fleur*] and tell him I expect Blandford and him to supper with me: our friends have long wished for his return, and none more than myself; never did I know a better creature, more honest, or ingenuous: I admire above all things his amiable complacency, and those social virtues that so strongly recommend him.

DORFISE.

Blandford is not of his disposition: he is so serious.

MONDOR.

So full of spleen!

DORFISE.

True, and so jealous!

MONDOR.

So affronting!

DORFISE.

He is—

MONDOR.

Very true.

DORFISE.

Let me speak, sir; I say he is—

MONDOR.

Yes, madam, I attend to you—he is—

DORFISE.

He is in short a dangerous man.

MME. DE BURLET.

They tell me he has fought nobly for his king and country, and distinguished himself greatly at sea.

DORFISE.

That may be, cousin, but by land he is dreadfully troublesome.

MONDOR.

And besides he is—

DORFISE.

True.

MONDOR.

O those sailors have all of them such horrid principles.

DORFISE.

They have so.

MME. DE BURLET.

But I have heard, cousin, that you formerly gave him some hopes—

DORFISE.

Yes: but since that I have taken an antipathy to the whole world, and quitted it: I began with him; 'twas he and the world together that have made me so fearful.

SCENE II.

DORFISE, MME. DE BURLET, MONDOR, COLLETTE.

COLLETTE.

Madam!

DORFISE.

Well!

COLLETTE.

M. Blandford has come.

DORFISE.

O heaven!

MME. DE BURLET.

Is Darmin with him?

COLLETTE.

Yes, madam.

MME. DE BURLET.

I am heartily glad of it.

DORFISE.

And I'm heartily sorry; I must retire; I would fly from the whole world.

MONDOR.

With me, I hope.

DORFISE.

No, sir, if you please, without you.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE III.

MME. DE BURLET, BLANDFORD, DARMIN, MONDOR, ADINE.

DARMIN.

[*To Mme. de Burlet.*

Permit me, madam, at length on my knees—

MME. DE BURLET.

[*Running up to Darmin.*

O my dear Darmin, come along, I've made an engagement for you to go to the ball when the comedy

is over: we'll prate as we go along; my chariot's below.

[*To Blandford.*

And you, M. Solemnity, will you come with us?

BLANDFORD.

No: I came here, madam, on a serious affair: away, ye train of triflers, go, and pretend to pleasures which you never enjoy; go, and be weary of one another as soon as you can: you and I [*turning to Adine*] will go in search of Dorfise.

SCENE IV.

BLANDFORD, ADINE, COLLETTE.

BLANDFORD.

Then we shall see a woman indeed; a woman submitting to every duty of life; a woman who for me has renounced the whole world; and who to her faithful passion joins the most scrupulous and rigid virtue: I hope you will endeavor to recommend yourself to her.

ADINE.

Of that, sir, you may assure yourself; I shall try to imitate her virtues; her example may be the best instruction to me.

BLANDFORD.

I'm glad to hear you think so: I'll introduce you to her: from this time forward I shall look upon you, Adine, as a son whom fortune has thrown in my way, to make amends for all her past unkindness; it is impossible to know without loving thee;

your disposition is only too pliant and flexible; nothing therefore can be of more service to you than to keep company with a prudent and discreet woman, whose acquaintance will improve the goodness of your heart, and confirm you in your honesty, and love of justice, without depriving you at the same time of that sweetness and complacency which I own I find myself deficient in: a woman of sense and beauty, who has nothing trifling or ridiculous in her, is an excellent school for a young fellow at your time of life; it will form your mind, and direct your heart; her house is the temple of honor.

ADINE.

The sooner we visit it then the better; but her example is so uncommon, I fear I shall never be able to follow it.

BLANDFORD.

Why not?

ADINE.

Because I like yours better: there is something in your virtue, though the external appearance has too much severity in it, that charms me: it must, I am sure, be good at the bottom: you have always been my favorite, but for Dorfise—

BLANDFORD.

[*Going towards the door of Dorfise's house.*

You must not indeed flatter yourself that you can at once be able to imitate her; but in time you may: however, let me advise you to see Dorfise, and to avoid her cousin.

[*He is going in, Collette comes out, stops him, and shuts the door; he knocks at it.*

COLLETTE.

You must not go in, sir.

BLANDFORD.

Not I?

COLLETTE.

No, sir.

BLANDFORD.

How's this, Blandford refused admittance?

COLLETTE.

My mistress, sir, is retired to her apartment, and would be private.

BLANDFORD.

I admire her delicacy, but I must go in.

COLLETTE.

Pray hear me, sir.

BLANDFORD.

Not I: I will go in, and this minute too.

[*He goes in.*

COLLETTE.

Stay, sir.

ADINE.

I'll follow him and see the event of this strange interview.

SCENE V.

COLLETTE.

[*Alone.*

Now will he see her, and discover all: I'm frightened to death about it: 'twill be all over now with

my poor mistress: what a foolish woman! to stipulate this secret marriage, and give herself to such a fellow as Bartolin: what will the malicious world say? well; women are strange creatures, that's the truth of it: nay, and so are the men too: what excessive weakness! to be sure my mistress is a fool; she deceives herself and everybody else; and half her time is employed in finding out artifices to hide her indiscretion, and repair her reputation. She follows her inclination, and then has recourse to intrigue and management, and yet she takes no care of the main point: this is a cursed adventure for us, and a most unfortunate return: how will Blandford take the injury she has done him? here have we no less than three husbands in the house, two of them promised, and the other, I believe, absolutely taken: a woman in such a case must be a little hampered.

SCENE VI.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

COLLETTE.

O madam, what's to be done?

DORFISE.

Fear nothing; there are ways and means to dazzle people's eyes, to delay, and put off matters; men are easily managed, their weakness is our strength, and helps our designs against them: I have got myself out of the worst scrape: our disagreeable interview is over—and I have sent the good man—God speed him—into the country to his old crony Bartolin, who may lend him some money; at least I shall gain time by it, and that's enough.

COLLETTE.

But surely, madam, the deuce was in you to sign that plagued contract! what had you to do with Bartolin?

DORFISE.

The devil, my dear, is full of spite, that's certain: that fellow persecuted me so: but we tempt, and are tempted, and the heart easily surrenders: you know we heard that Blandford would never come back again.

COLLETTE.

That he was dead.

DORFISE.

I was left without any support, money or friends, and weak withal: all owing to the weakness of my sex, Collette; but our stars will prevail: 'tis often the lot of a beauty to marry a scab: my heart was severely attacked.

COLLETTE.

There are certain seasons very dangerous to a prude: but if you must sacrifice to love, you should have taken the chevalier, he is handsome.

DORFISE.

O but I wanted a bit of intrigue and mystery, besides I am not fond of his character: but he is useful to me: he is my puffer, my emissary: he's a prate-apace you know, and can scatter reports about town for me that may be serviceable.

COLLETTE.

But Bartolin is such a villain.

DORFISE.

Yes, but—

COLLETTE.

And for his wit, I'm sure there are no charms in that.

DORFISE.

No: but—

COLLETTE.

But what?

DORFISE.

Fate, whim, caprice, my unhappy circumstances, a little avarice withal, and then opportunity—in short, I surrendered, played the fool, and signed the contract. I kept, you know, Blandford's strong box, and after he was gone, gave away a little of his money for him—out of charity: who would ever have thought, that, after two years, he should be constant to his old flame, and come back again to look for his wife and his strong box?

COLLETTE.

Everybody here said he was dead, and now he is not; the fellow's a fool, and stands in his own light.

DORFISE.

[*Resuming the Prude.*

Well, since the man's alive, I must give him his jewels back: let him take them: but Bartolin has got them to keep for me; he fancies they are mine, holds them fast, and is fond of them and as jealous as he is of me.

COLLETTE.

So I suppose.

DORFISE.

Husbands, jewels, virtue, and character, how to reconcile you all, heaven knows!

SCENE VII.

MONDOR, ADINE, DORFISE.

MONDOR.

I must drive away this powerful rival, who gives himself such airs, and despises me; positively must.

ADINE. [*Coming in slowly.*

What's this? I'll listen a little.

MONDOR.

In short, I must make myself happy, and punish his insolence: 'tis you, 'tis Dorfise alone whom I adore: let old Darmin enjoy his little coquette, they are not worth our notice: but Blandford, the severe and virtuous Blandford, there I own I could wish to triumph: he thinks you can refuse him nothing, because he is a man of honor and virtue: now to me these are the most disagreeable creatures in the universe; indeed, my queen, you'll soon be heartily tired of him.

DORFISE.

[*Prudishly, after looking steadfastly at Adine.*

You are mistaken, sir: I have the highest respect and esteem for M. Blandford.

MONDOR.

There are those, madam, whom one may esteem, and yet laugh at, and make fools of: is it not so?

ADINE. [*Aside.*

Amazing! she is constant and virtuous: doubtless she loves him: I am confounded: who would have thought it?

DORFISE.

What is he talking of?

ADINE.

[*Aside.*

Dorfise is faithful, and, to complete my misery, she is handsome.

DORFISE.

[*To Mondor, after looking tenderly at Adine.*

He says, I am handsome.

MONDOR.

There he's right: but he begins to be troublesome: hark'ee, child, I have something to say to this lady in private.

ADINE.

I will retire, sir.

DORFISE.

[*To Mondor.*

I say, sir, you are greatly mistaken.

[*To Adine.*

Stay you here, my dear.

[*To Mondor.*

How dare you, sir, send him away?

[*To Adine.*

Come hither, child: he's almost ready to weep: the sweet boy! he shall stay with me: Blandford brought him to me; and from the first moment I took a fancy to him: I like his disposition.

MONDOR.

O let his disposition alone, for heaven's sake, and attend to me: this Blandford, madam, I know you hate him: you have often told me he is brutal, jealous—

DORFISE.

[*Angrily.*

Never, sir.

[*To Adine.*

What age are you?

ADINE.

Eighteen, madam.

DORFISE.

Such tender youth as thine requires the curb of wisdom to guide and direct it: vice is bewitching, temptations frequent, and example dangerous: a single glance may be your ruin; be upon your guard against women, nay, and against yourself, and dread the poisonous blast that withers the sweet flower of virtue.

MONDOR.

Prithee, Dorfise, let the boy's flower alone: what is it to you whether it be withered or not? mind me, my dear.

DORFISE.

My God! his innocence is so engaging!

MONDOR.

'Tis a mere child.

DORFISE.

[*Coming up to Adine.*

What's your name, my dear, and whence come you?

ADINE.

My name, madam, is Adine; I was born in Greece: M. Blandford brought me over with Darmin.

DORFISE.

'Twas kindly done of him.

MONDOR.

What a ridiculous curiosity! here I am making strong love to you, and you all the while talking to a child.

DORFISE.

[*Softly.*

Be quiet, you blockhead!

SCENE VIII.

DORFISE, MONDOR, ADINE, COLLETTE.

COLLETTE.

Madam.

DORFISE.

Well!

COLLETTE.

They wait for you at the assembly.

DORFISE.

Well: I shall be there presently.

MONDOR.

Hang your engagement: I tell you what, my dear; you and I will put an end to these prudish meetings, these conspiracies against love, taste, and gayety: upon my word, child, it does not become a beautiful young creature, as you are, to go about declaring against everything that's joyous, amongst a parcel of toothless old beldames, that meet together in their gloomy vaults to weep over the pleasures of the living: but I'll go and rout these immortal tattlers, and stop their clack with a hundred bon-mots.

DORFISE.

For heaven's sake, don't go and expose me there, I desire you; positively you shall not.

MONDOR.

Positively I will, this minute, and tell them you are coming.

[*He goes out.*

DORFISE.

The wild creature!

[*To Adine.*

Avoid, my dear, whatever you do, such fools as these: be prudent, and discreet: make my compliments to Blandford—what a piercing eye!

ADINE.

[*Turning back.*

Did you speak, madam?

DORFISE.

That sweet complexion! that ingenuous look! so charming! so modest!—I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you often.

ADINE.

I shall pay my respects, madam, with the greatest pleasure: madam, your servant.

DORFISE.

Adieu, my dear child.

ADINE.

I don't know what to think of it: I can't discover whether she deceives him or not; all I know is, I love him.

SCENE IX.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

[*Looking after Adine.*

What said he? I love! love whom? perhaps the boy has fallen in love with me; he talks to himself, stops, and looks at me; I have certainly turned his brain.

COLLETTE.

He ogles you most wonderfully, and looks with such tenderness.

DORFISE.

Is that my fault, Collette? how can I possibly help it?

COLLETTE.

Very true, madam: but danger approaches: I am terribly afraid of this Blandford's coming back again, and dread still more the savage resentment of Bartolin.

DORFISE.

[*Sighing.*

This young Turk's mighty handsome! do you think he is a Turk? that an infidel can have such softness in his manner, so fine a figure? I fancy I could convert him.

COLLETTE.

I'll tell you what I fancy: that when it is discovered you are married to Bartolin, your reputation will be severely handled: Blandford will storm

dreadfully, and your little Turk will be of no great service to you.

DORFISE.

Never do you fear.

COLLETTE

I have long, madam, relied on your prudence: but Bartolin is a jealous brute, and what's worse, he is —your husband: 'tis really a melancholy case, and indeed rather singular: the two rivals, I am afraid, will be very intractable.

DORFISE.

O I can avoid them both: peace is the object of my wishes: it is my duty and my interest to foresee and prevent the ill consequences of a discovery; I have friends, men of merit and fortune.

COLLETTE.

Take their advice.

DORFISE.

I intend to, immediately.

COLLETTE.

But whose?

DORFISE.

Why, let me see—suppose I ask this stranger—this little—

COLLETTE.

Ask his advice? the advice of a beardless boy?

DORFISE.

He seems to be very sensible, and if he is, why not consult him? let me tell you, young people are the best counsellors in things of this kind: he might

throw some light on my affairs; besides, he is Blandford's friend, and I must talk with him.

COLLETTE.

O to be sure, madam, 'tis quite necessary.

DORFISE.

And as one talks over such things better at table, it would not be amiss to ask him to dinner: what think you?

COLLETTE.

Softly there, madam: excuse me, but you who are so afraid of scandal—

DORFISE.

I am afraid of nothing: I know what I am about: when once a reputation is established, we may be perfectly easy about it: all the party will defend us, and cry out on our side.

COLLETTE.

Ay, but the world will talk, madam.

DORFISE.

Well! for once we'll submit to the wicked world: I'll give up this innocent dinner, and not sharpen their malicious tongues: I'll talk no more with Adine, never see him again; and yet, after all, what could they say of a child? but to chastity and virtue I will add the appearance of them also; will observe decency and decorum: I'll do it in my cousin's name, and beg her—

COLLETTE.

An excellent contrivance! a woman of the world has no reputation to lose; one may put her name to

ten billets-doux; she may have as many lovers, as many assignations as she pleases: nobody's offended, nobody blushes, nobody's surprised: but if, perchance, a lady of honor makes a false step, it must be carefully concealed.

DORFISE.

A false step! I make a false step! thank heaven! I have nothing to reproach myself with: to be sure, I have signed, but I am not yet absolute Mme. Bartolin: he has a claim, and that's all; and perhaps I may find a method to get rid of my master: I have an excellent design in my head: if this handsome Turk has any inclination to me, I am satisfied everything will go well; I am yet mistress of myself, and can terminate all happily: go you, and ask him to dinner: is there any harm in having an agreeable young fellow at one's table, and one that can give good advice, too?

COLLETTE.

O excellent advice! nothing can be more proper: let us immediately set about this charitable work.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

Is it not he? how uneasy I am! hark! somebody knocks; he's come: Collette, hullo! Collette: 'tis he.

COLLETTE.

No, madam, 'tis the chevalier; that impertinent coxcomb, who runs in and out, skips, laughs, prates, and flutters about perpetually; he swears he will have a tête-à-tête with you; and at last, between jest and earnest, I have driven him away.

DORFISE.

O send him to my cousin: I hate their insipid parties, their ridiculous prating and nonsense: dear Collette, preserve me from them.

COLLETTE.

Hush! hush! I hear somebody coming.

DORFISE.

O 'tis my sweet Greek.

COLLETTE.

'Tis he, I believe.

SCENE II.

DORFISE, ADINE.

DORFISE.

Pray come in: good morrow to you, sir: how I tremble! pray, sir, be seated.

ADINE.

I'm quite confounded—I beg pardon, madam, I believe, another—

DORFISE.

Be not alarmed, sir: I am that other: my cousin dines abroad to-day with Blandford: you must supply his place, and stay with me.

ADINE.

Supply his place, madam! who can do that? what passion can equal his, or who can exceed him in virtue, honor, and nobleness of soul?

DORFISE.

You talk of him with warmth; your friendship has life and spirit in it: I admire you for it.

ADINE.

'Tis a sincere regard, but an unhappy one.

DORFISE.

Tenderness is to the last degree becoming in youth like thine; virtue is nothing, if it is not linked by the sacred bonds of friendship.

ADINE.

Alas! if a natural sensibility is the infallible mark of virtue, without vanity, I may boast some degree of worth and honesty.

DORFISE.

A soul so noble deserves to be cultivated and improved; perhaps I was born to be the happy instrument; many a woman has long wished in vain to find a tender friend, lively, yet discreet, who possessed all the graces of youth without its flighty extravagance; and, if I am not deceived, in thee all those qualities are united: indeed they are: what lucky star conducted thee to Marseilles?

ADINE.

I was in Greece, and the brave Blandford brought me from thence; I have told you so twice already.

DORFISE.

Suppose you have, I could hear it again and again: but tell me, why is that fair forehead wrapped up in a turban? are you really a Turk?

ADINE.

Greece is my country.

DORFISE.

Who would have thought it? Is Greece in Turkey then? O how I should like to talk Greek with you! why you have all the sprightliness, all the natural ease of a true Frenchman: surely nature mistook when she made you a Greek: well, I bless Providence for throwing you thus amongst us.

ADINE.

Here I am, to my sorrow.

DORFISE.

And canst thou be unhappy?

ADINE.

Indeed I am so: but 'tis the fault of my own heart.

DORFISE.

Ay: 'tis the heart that does all the good and all the evil in this world: 'tis that which makes us both miserable: have you any engagement then?

ADINE.

I have, indeed: a base intriguing woman has betrayed me: her heart, like her face, is painted and disguised: she is bold, haughty, and full of artifice; more dangerous, because she hides her vices beneath the mask of virtue: how cruel is it that so false a heart should govern one who is but too honest!

DORFISE.

Some faithless woman! let us be revenged on her: who is she? of what rank? what country? what is her name?

ADINE.

That I must not tell you.

DORFISE.

Why so? I fear you have art, too, the art of concealment: O you have every talent to please and to delight, young and discreet, beautiful and sensible: but I will explain myself: if, to make you amends for all the injuries you have received, you should meet with a woman rich, amiable, admired, and esteemed; one who had a heart constant, firm, and hitherto untouched, such as is seldom to be met with in Turkey, and more seldom perhaps in this country; if such a one could be found, tell me, sweet youth, what think you? what would you say to her?

ADINE.

I would say—she meant but to deceive me.

DORFISE.

Nay, that would be carrying your distrust too far: come, come, be more confident.

ADINE.

Forgive me, madam; but the unfortunate, you know, are always a little suspicious.

DORFISE.

And what, for example, may your suspicions be whilst I am talking to and looking at you?

ADINE.

My suspicions are that you mean to try me.

DORFISE.

O the malicious little rogue! how cunning he is with that air of innocence: 'tis love himself just out of his childhood: get you gone: I am in absolute danger: positively I'll see you no more.

ADINE.

Since 'tis your order, madam, I take my leave.

DORFISE.

But you need not be in such a hurry to obey: come back, come back, I esteem you too much to be angry with you; but don't abuse my esteem, my sincere regard.

ADINE.

But you esteem Blandford: can one esteem two at the same time?

DORFISE.

O no, never: the laws of reason and of love allow succession, but not division: you'll learn a great deal by living with me, child.

ADINE.

I have learned a great deal by what I see already.

DORFISE.

When heaven, my dear, makes a fine woman, it always at the same time forms a man on purpose for her: we go in search of each other for a long time, and make twenty choices before we fix on the right; we are always looking as it were for our counterpart, and seldom, very seldom, meet with it—by a secret instinct we fly after true happiness; and she [*looking tenderly at him*] who finds you, need look no further.

ADINE.

If you knew what I really am, you would soon change your opinion of me.

DORFISE.

Never.

ADINE.

If once you knew me, I'm sure you would think me unworthy of your care: we should both be caught in the same snare.

DORFISE.

Caught, my dear, what can you mean? we're interrupted: O 'tis you, Collette.

SCENE III.

COLLETTE, DORFISE, ADINE.

COLLETTE.

[*In a violent flurry.*

Ay, madam, I could not help it; but there's a more impertinent visitor still coming; M. Bartolin.

DORFISE.

Indeed! I did not expect him till to-morrow: the villain has deceived me: returned already!

COLLETTE.

Ay, madam, and here's another unlucky accident: the chevalier, that king of coxcombs, not knowing the master of the house, is disputing with him in the street, and keeps him there in spite of his teeth.

DORFISE.

So much the better.

COLLETTE.

No, madam, so much the worse: for this blunderer, not knowing whom he is talking to, laughs in his face, insists upon it that nobody shall come in here to-day; that everybody shall be excluded as well as himself; that he's an impertinent rascal, and that you were engaged in your own apartment in a sober tête-à-tête with a pretty young fellow. Bartolin swears in wrath that he'll break the door down: Mondor splits his sides with laughing, and the other bursts with spleen.

DORFISE.

And I in the meantime am dying with fear. O Collette, what shall I do? at what hole shall we creep out?

ADINE.

What can this mystery be?

DORFISE.

The mystery is, that we are both undone: Collette, where are you going?

ADINE.

What will become of me?

DORFISE.

[*To Collette.*

Hark'ee: stay: what a time was this for him to return! [*to Adine*] you must hide yourself for to-night in this closet: you'll find a black sack there, wrap yourself up in it, and be quiet. My God! it is he, that's certain.

ADINE.

[*Going into the closet.*

O love, what do I suffer for thee!

DORFISE.

Poor lad! he's desperately fond of me.

COLLETTE.

Hush! hush! here he comes, your dear spouse.

SCENE IV.

BARTOLIN, DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

[*Meeting Bartolin.*

My dear sir, heaven be with you! how late you are: you made me so uneasy, I was ready to die with fretting.

BARTOLIN.

Mondor told me quite another story.

DORFISE.

It's all a lie, every syllable he says, a horrid lie: I think I ought to be believed first; you know I'm sincere: the fellow loves me to madness, and is piqued at my refusal of him: his eternal clack teases me to death: I will positively never see him again.

BARTOLIN.

He seemed to me to talk rationally enough.

DORFISE.

Don't believe a word he says.

BARTOLIN.

Well, well, I shan't mind him: I only came to finish our affairs, and to take some necessaries here out of the closet.

DORFISE.

[*In a persuasive tone.*

What are you doing there now? come, don't go into a body's closet.

BARTOLIN.

Why not?

DORFISE.

[*After pausing a little.*

Why, do you know, I had the same thought as you, and have just been putting my papers in order there, so I sent for our old advocate, and we were consulting together, when he was taken with a sudden weakness.

BARTOLIN.

O nothing but old age, he's very old.

COLLETTE.

And so, sir, they took him in there to give him a—

BARTOLIN.

Ay, I understand you.

DORFISE.

He's retired a little, and has taken a dose of my syrup: I suppose by this time he has gone to sleep.

BARTOLIN.

That he has not, I am sure, for I hear him walking about and coughing.

COLLETTE.

And would you go to disturb an advocate in the midst of his cough?

BARTOLIN.

I don't like this: I'll go in.

DORFISE.

Grant heaven he may find nothing there: hark! what do I hear! he cries out; murder! my poor advocate's killed to be sure, and I am undone: which way shall I fly? in what convent shall I hide my shame? where shall I drown myself?

BARTOLIN.

[*Returning, and holding Adine by the arm.*

O ho! my dear spouse that is to be: your advocates are mighty pretty figures: you have made a good choice, picked him out from the whole bar: come, my old practitioner, you must disappear from this court, and harangue out the window: away with you.

DORFISE.

My dear husband, do but hear me.

ADINE.

He her husband!

BARTOLIN.

[*To Adine.*

Come, rascal! I must begin my revenge upon you, and curry you out of your insolence.

ADINE.

Alas! sir, on my knees I ask your pardon; indeed I have not merited your resentment: when you know

"YOUR ADVOCATES ARE MIGHTY PRETTY
FIGURES"

"YOUR ADVOCATES ARE MIGHTY PRETTY FIGURES"

me, you will lament my fate: I am not what I appear to be.

BARTOLIN.

You appear, my friend, to be a scoundrel, a dangerous rival, and shall be punished: come along, sir.

ADINE.

Help, here, help! for heaven's sake, sir.

DORFISE.

He's mad with passion: help, neighbors, help!

BARTOLIN.

Hold your tongue.

DORFISE, COLLETTE, ADINE.

Help, here, help!

BARTOLIN.

[*Thrusting out Adine.*

Come, sir, get out of my house.

SCENE V.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

What an unfortunate affair this is! he'll kill the poor boy, and me, too, perhaps.

COLLETTE.

To be sure, nothing but the devil could make you sign a contract with such a wretch as this.

DORFISE.

The villain! go, Collette, this minute, to a justice, and get a warrant for him: charge him with—

COLLETTE.

With what, madam?

DORFISE.

With everything.

COLLETTE.

Very well, madam: but which way are you going?

DORFISE.

That I know not.

SCENE VI.

MME. DE BURLET, DORFISE, COLLETTE.

MME. DE BURLET.

Why, cousin, cousin, what's the matter?

DORFISE.

O cousin!

MME. DE BURLET.

One would have thought you'd been robbed and murdered, or that your house had been on fire: what a roaring and a noise there is here, my dear!

DORFISE.

O cousin, I'll tell you the affair; but, for heaven's sake, keep my secret.

MME. DE BURLET.

I'm no keeper of secrets, cousin; but I can be as

discreet as other folks upon occasion: what is this mighty affair of yours?

DORFISE.

The affair's a very bad one, I assure you; in short —I am—

MME. DE BURLET.

What?

DORFISE.

Promised in marriage, cousin.

MME. DE BURLET.

I know it, my dear—to Blandford: so much the better: I think it's a good match: I wish you happy, and intend to dance at your wedding.

DORFISE.

O my dear, you're mistaken: Bartolin, who is now swearing below stairs, is the man.

MME. DE BURLET.

Indeed! so much the worse: I don't approve of your choice; but if it is done, it can't be helped: is he absolutely your husband to all intents and purposes?

DORFISE.

Not yet: the world is an utter stranger to it; but the contract has been made a great while.

MME. DE BURLET.

O cancel it by all means.

DORFISE.

It will set the wicked world talking: O cousin, I have been sadly treated. This vile man, you must

know, found me with a young Turk, who was shut up in my closet; not with any bad design.

MME. DE BURLET.

O no, to be sure! pray, cousin, is not this a little out of character for a prude?

DORFISE.

Not at all: it is a little *faux-pas,* a small weakness only.

MME. DE BURLET.

Well, I am glad you own so much: our faults are sometimes useful: this slip may soften your temper; perhaps for the future you will be less severe.

DORFISE.

Severe or not, for heaven's sake, cousin, get me out of this scrape, and save me from the tongue of scandal, and the violence of Bartolin; if possible, deliver the poor lad, who is scarce eighteen. O, here comes my spouse.

SCENE VII.

BARTOLIN, DORFISE, MME. DE BURLET.

MME. DE BURLET.

What an uproar you are making here for nothing! only on a slight suspicion to put all her friends in such a taking: fie, M. Bartolin.

BARTOLIN.

I ask pardon: indeed, ladies, I am ashamed, and sorry I conceived such suspicions; but appearances were strong against her: how indeed could I ever

have imagined that this young fellow, for so I thought him, was only a girl in disguise?

DORFISE.

[*Aside.*

An excellent come-off.

MME. DE BURLET.

Mighty well indeed! so my lady here took a girl for a boy?

BARTOLIN.

The poor child is in tears still: by my troth, I pitied her: but why could you not have told me who she was? why take a pleasure in trying my temper, and making me angry.

DORFISE.

[*Aside.*

Droll enough this! he has played his part well, however, to persuade Bartolin he is a girl, and get off so well: 'twas a charming contrivance: the dear little rogue! but love is a great wit. [*To Bartolin*] Now thou abominable jealous wretch, answer me, how dare you thus affront my virtue? the poor little innocent confided in me; my cousin here knows how warmly I espoused her cause, and protected her honor: you ought to have had a loose coquette, a jilt, for your wife; you deserve no better, and I hope you'll meet with one: I'll expose you, sir, though I know it will cost me dear, but I am determined at all events to have the contract annulled.

BARTOLIN.

I know upon these occasions women must cry: but prithee, my dear, don't cry so much: come, let us be friends; and let me desire you, madam, [*to Mme.*

de Burlet] to say nothing about this affair: I have some very good reasons for concealing it.

DORFISE.

[*To Mme. de Burlet.*

Be silent, dear cousin, and save me; on no account mention it to the good M. Blandford.

MME. DE BURLET.

You may depend on it, I never will.

BARTOLIN.

We shall be greatly obliged to you.

SCENE VIII.

DORFISE, MME. DE BURLET, BARTOLIN, COLLETTE.

COLLETTE.

M. Blandford is below, madam, and says he must come up.

DORFISE.

O dreadful! this is my luck! always crossed—

BARTOLIN.

But after all—

MME. DE BURLET.

Nay, nay, after what you have seen, and being guilty of so much injustice as you have, you have no business to give yourself airs: try what you can do —to obey.

SCENE IX.

DORFISE, MME. DE BURLET.

MME. DE BURLET.

I'm glad to see this affair has turned out so well, however: to be sure your intended spouse is rather short-sighted: but between you and me, cousin, it was a strange choice this: and then to take a boy for a girl, at his age: well, husbands will be husbands still I find, always jealous, always laughed at, and led by the nose.

DORFISE.

[*Prudishly.*

I don't understand this language, madam, nor have I deserved this treatment from you: surely you don't really believe that a young fellow was locked up in my closet?

MME. DE BURLET.

Indeed but I do, my dear.

DORFISE.

What! when my husband told you to the contrary?

MME. DE BURLET.

Perhaps your spouse might be mistaken; he may have bad eyes: besides, cousin, did you not tell me yourself here in this very place, that a young fellow—

DORFISE.

Ridiculous! what I, child, I tell you so? never: do you think I have lost my senses? indeed, cousin,

you should take more care what you say: when once a woman's tongue has got a habit of talking thus lightly, and spreading scandalous stories, invented merely to calumniate and injure people, there is no end of it, but 'tis a hundred to one that she repents of it sometime in her life.

MME. DE BURLET.

I calumniate, I scandalize you, cousin?

DORFISE.

You, madam: I vow and swear—

MME. DE BURLET.

Don't swear, cousin.

DORFISE.

But I will.

MME. DE BURLET.

Fie, my dear, fie: come, come, I shall believe no more of the story than I ought to believe: take a husband, cousin, two if you please; deceive them both as well as you can; make young fellows pass for girls; on the strength of your character govern twenty families, and be called a woman of virtue; with all my heart, it will give me no uneasiness, you are extremely welcome: nay, I admire your management and discretion: 'tis your pride and glory to deceive the world, and mine to divert myself with it, without descending to falsehood: I live for my pleasure: adieu, my dear, my worldly weakness bends in all humility to your profound wisdom: dear cousin, adieu.

SCENE X.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

Now will that foolish creature go and pull me to pieces: my honor and my character are gone: the libertines will laugh at my expense: Dorfise will be the common butt of every satirist: my name will be hitched into a hundred rhymes, and furnish matter for every singsong in town: Blandford will believe the scandal, and Bartolin will cry for vengeance: how shall I stop the tongues of calumny? two husbands and a lover in one day! what a deal one has to go through to be a prude! would it not be better after all to fear nothing, to affect nothing, and be a plain woman of honor? well: one day or other I'll try to be one.

COLLETTE.

At least, madam, let us take care to appear as such; when we do all we can, you know, we have done enough; and she is not always a woman of virtue who wishes to be so.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

O Collette, I'm inevitably ruined: would I could see young Adine; he is so kind, and so sensible! he

would tell me everything they do and say, and I might take my measures with him accordingly: my affairs would at least be more settled, and I should know what I have to depend on; what shall I do, Collette?

COLLETTE.

See him, and talk to him freely.

DORFISE.

Right: towards evening: O Collette, if success would but crown this mysterious affair, if I could preserve my reputation, and keep my lover, if I could but keep one of them, I should be happy.

COLLETTE.

Ay, ay, one of them is enough, in conscience.

DORFISE.

But have you taken care the chevalier shall be here presently; that he shall come privately; and, according to custom, let everybody know it?

COLLETTE.

O never fear, he'll be here I warrant you; he's always ready, and fancies you've a passion for him.

DORFISE.

He may be of service: wise men in their designs, the better to compass their ends, always make use of fools.

SCENE II.

DORFISE, MONDOR, COLLETTE.

DORFISE.

My dear chevalier, come along: I have something to say to you.

MONDOR.

You know, madam, I am the lowest of your subjects, your humble slave, your chevalier: what must I do? tilt for you? fight for you? die for you? spite of all your cruelty, I am ready: speak, madam, and it is done.

DORFISE.

And am I indeed so happy as to have charmed the agreeable Mondor? but do you love me as you ought to love me, with that pure and refined passion?

MONDOR.

I do; but prithee, my dear, don't be so formal; beauty is most engaging when it is easy and tractable: the excess of virtue is disgusting: in short, my dear, you want a little of my correction.

DORFISE.

What think you of young Adine?

MONDOR.

Who, I? nothing at all? his figure makes me perfectly easy, I assure you: Mars and Hercules were never jealous of Adonis.

DORFISE.

Well: I love your confidence, and shall reward it: the malicious world perhaps will tell you I am se-

cretly engaged; but 'tis false; believe them not: a hundred lovers have ogled, and teased me, but I was born to be subdued by you, and you alone.

MONDOR.

That's more indeed than I could flatter myself with the hopes of.

DORFISE.

To convince you of it, I promise to marry you as soon as ever you please: be prudent, and be happy.

MONDOR.

Happiness is enough for me, prudence we'll leave to another opportunity: but do not, my dear charmer, delay it: time, you know, is precious.

DORFISE.

But then one thing I must insist on from you.

MONDOR.

I am your husband, madam, and you may command me.

DORFISE.

You must take care that none of my troublesome visitors intrude on me to-night: the proud, peevish Blandford, my cousin, and her fool Darmin, with all their train of impertinent relations, must go somewhere else, for I positively will not be disturbed by them; then, chevalier, at midnight, and not before, I'll meet you in the arbor; bring your lawyer with you, and we'll sign and seal.

MONDOR.

Transporting thought! how I shall triumph over that fool Blandford! well, I will so laugh at, so ridicule the poor creature.

DORFISE.

Be sure you don't forget to be at my window a little before midnight: away: be discreet.

MONDOR.

O if Blandford did but know this!

DORFISE.

Away, begone, or we shall be surprised.

MONDOR.

Adieu, my dear wife.

DORFISE.

Adieu.

MONDOR.

I go with rapture, to wait for the dear happy hour when prudery shall be sacrificed to love.

SCENE III.

DORFISE, COLLETTE.

COLLETTE.

Well, if I can guess at your design, hang me: 'tis a riddle to me.

DORFISE.

I'll explain it to you: I've made Mondor promise to tell nothing, but I know very well he'll tell all, that's enough, his tale will justify me: Blandford will think everything mere calumny, and not know a word of the truth; to-day at least I shall be safe; and after to-morrow, if success crowns my designs, I shall be afraid of nobody.

COLLETTE.

Delightful! I'm glad to hear you say so, and yet you put me in a horrid fright: are you sure, ma'am, the plan is well laid? and that you won't, after all, fall into the snare yourself, which you laid for others? for heaven's sake, take care what you do.

DORFISE.

O Collette, Collette, how strangely one slip brings on another! we are led aside from error to error, and from crime to crime, till our heads turn round, and we fall down the precipice: but I have one string still to my bow; I am sure of young Adine: the chevalier comes at twelve, but my little lover will be beforehand with him: let him be here at nine, Collette, do you hear me?

COLLETTE.

I'll take care of that, madam.

DORFISE.

They take him for a girl, by his air, his voice, and his beardless chin; therefore, tell him I would have him dress himself in girl's clothes.

COLLETTE.

An excellent scheme! heaven prosper it!

DORFISE.

The boy may serve, you know, to dispel one's melancholy: but the great point I would bring about is, to throw all the scandal upon my cousin, and to make Blandford believe that Adine came here upon her account: let him fall a dupe to his own credulity.

COLLETTE.

The fittest instrument you could have chosen: for he believes everything that's bad of her, and everything that's good of you: imagines he sees clearly, and at the same time is stark blind: I have taken care already to confirm him in the opinion that our little coquette is in love with the boy, and not you.

DORFISE.

To be sure, lies are bad things; but they are mighty serviceable sometimes, and do a great deal of good.

SCENE IV.

BLANDFORD, DORFISE.

BLANDFORD.

O tempora! O mores! dreadful corruption indeed! to desire him to visit her! the poor, simple, ingenuous youth, she wants to draw him into a passion for her, and employs all the little subtleties, all the snares which love makes use of to catch unwary hearts.

DORFISE.

Well, but after all, M. Blandford, she may not have carried it so far as we imagine: I would not do her so much injury as to suppose it: one should not think evil of one's neighbor: to be sure, things were in a fair way, but you know our French coquettes.

BLANDFORD.

Yes, yes, I know them.

DORFISE.

The moment a young man appears with an air of innocence and simplicity, they are after him.

BLANDFORD.

Yes; yes: vice, above all things, is fond of seducing virtue: but how, Dorfise, can you bear people of such character?

DORFISE.

As patiently as I can, sir: but this is not all.

BLANDFORD.

Why, what, pray—

DORFISE.

O sir, you have another tale to hear: do you know, these excellent contrivers would endeavor to persuade the world truly that the young fellow was brought in for me?

BLANDFORD.

For you?

DORFISE.

Yes; they say I wanted to seduce him.

BLANDFORD.

Well, that to be sure is ridiculous to the last degree: for you!

DORFISE.

Ay, for me, and that this pretty youth—

BLANDFORD.

That was really a fine invention.

DORFISE.

A better than they think for. They have played

me a great many such tricks: O M. Blandford, if you knew what I suffer! they'll tell you, too, I'm to be married to that fool, Mondor, and this very night.

BLANDFORD.

O my dear Dorfise! the more thou art wounded by the envenomed darts of slander and calumny, with the warmer zeal shall this heart, that adores thee, defend thy injured and unspotted virtue.

DORFISE.

You are deceived, indeed you are.

BLANDFORD.

No, Dorfise: I think I know myself a little, and I would have laid my life on it I saw your cousin ogling Adine this very day: let me tell you, it requires sense and understanding to be honest: I never knew a fool with a good heart: virtue itself is nothing but good sense: I am sorry for Darmin, because I really love and esteem him; it was against my advice he ventured to embark in such a leaky vessel.

SCENE V.

BLANDFORD, DORFISE, DARMIN, MME. DE BURLET.

MME. DE BURLET.

What? always dismal and solemn, full of spleen and rancor, grumbling and growling at all mankind, that either don't hear you, or if they do, only laugh at your folly? dear virtuous fool, finish thy soliloquies, and come along with me: I have just bought a few trinkets, you shall have some of them: come,

we're going to Mondor's, he's to treat us; I have ordered him to get music, to purge your melancholy humors; and after that, my dear, I'll take you by the hand, and dance with you till to-morrow morning, [*to Dorfise*] ay, and you shall dance too, Mme. Prim.

DORFISE.

Prithee, hair-brains, hold thy tongue: such things would not become me; and besides, madam, you should remember—

MME. DE BURLET.

None of your "besides" I beg you, madam: every thing is forgotten; my philosophy is, remember nothing.

DORFISE.

[*To Blandford.*

You see now whether I was right or not: your servant, sir: she really grows too scandalous, I must be gone.

BLANDFORD.

O stay, madam.

DORFISE.

No, sir: 'tis impossible: it hurts my soul, my honor—

MME. DE BURLET.

My goodness! talk less of honor, madam, and regard it more.

[*Dorfise goes out.*

DARMIN.

[*To Mme. de Burlet.*

She seems out of humor: I fancy my friend, Blandford, begins to find her out.

MME. DE BURLET.

O all the world must talk of it; but Darmin and I say nothing.

BLANDFORD.

I fancy not, indeed: you would hardly confess to me such folly and extravagance.

DARMIN.

No, sir; we would not make you so unhappy.

MME. DE BURLET.

We know your humor too well, to make you still more miserable by reproaching you with your misfortunes.

BLANDFORD.

Go, go, hide yourselves both, and die with shame.

MME. DE BURLET.

Why should we disturb at once the quiet of your whole life, by exposing Dorfise, and make you a common laughing-stock? no, sir; I own I am light and airy, free, and familiar, but have yet some goodness in me, and am no busybody: I should see you deceived a thousand times by your friend, and duped by your wife, hear your adventures chanted through every street, nay, sing them myself, before ever you should hear a word from me: to tell you the truth, the two great ends I have in view are peace and pleasure; I love myself, and therefore hate all idle reports and scandalous tales, true or false: live and be happy is my motto: and he, I think, is a great fool who makes himself miserable by the follies of others.

BLANDFORD.

Light, unthinking woman! it is not the affairs of others, it is your own, madam, that now call for your attention.

MME. DE BURLET.

Mine, sir?

BLANDFORD.

Yes, madam: 'tis you who are to blame, and highly, too; you who seduced a virtuous youth, and then endeavored to lay the shameful intrigue on the innocent Dorfise.

MME. DE BURLET.

O the scheme is excellent: it is more than I expected: and so it was I, who sometimes—

BLANDFORD.

Yes, madam, you yourself.

MME. DE BURLET.

With Adine!

BLANDFORD.

Yes.

MME. DE BURLET.

I am in love with him then?

BLANDFORD.

Most certainly.

MME. DE BURLET.

And 'twas I that put him in the closet?

BLANDFORD.

It was: the thing was clear enough.

MME. DE BURLET.

O mighty well! a lucky thought indeed! I admire the contrivance: O my dear madman, what a mix-

ture thou art of honesty and folly! the very model of Don Quixote, brave, sensible, knowing, and virtuous, yet in one point an absolute fool; but for heaven's sake take care how you recover your senses: believe me, it would be the worst thing you ever did in your life: well, folly has its advantages: adieu: come, Darmin.

SCENE VI.

BLANDFORD, DARMIN.

BLANDFORD.

Stay, Darmin, I have your honor and your interest at heart: I am angry, and I have reason to be so; in short, you must quit this artful woman, get out of the snare she has laid for you, despise her, or break with me.

DARMIN.

The alternative is a cruel one: I own to thee, I love my friend, and I love my mistress: but how can thy hard heart judge so uncharitably of all human kind: can't you see that this web of perfidy is woven by a base, designing woman? that she deceives you, and would lay the shame and ignominy on another?

BLANDFORD.

Dost thou not see, fool as thou art, that a vile, scandalous, abandoned wretch has chosen thee for her tool, her butt, her stalking horse, that, like an idiot, you bite at the hook; and that she is only trying to see how far she can exercise her tyranny over your easy heart?

DARMIN.

Easy as it is, let me entreat you, ask the only witness who is able to determine it: I have sent for young Adine, he will tell you the whole truth of the affair.

BLANDFORD.

O yes: I doubt not but the jade has tutored her young parrot well, and taught him his lesson: but let him come, let him endeavor to deceive me; I shall not believe him: I see your intention, I see plainly enough, you want, by every artifice, to blacken and destroy my dear Dorfise, to draw me off to your niece, whose charms you have so often boasted: but you need not give yourself the trouble, for I shall never think of her.

DARMIN.

As you please for that: but indeed, Blandford, I pity your folly: to experience the falsehood of a perfidious woman may perhaps be many a poor man's fate, and must be borne; but really to lose one's money is a serious affair: this Bartolin, this noble friend of yours, has he refunded?

BLANDFORD.

What business is that of yours?

DARMIN.

I beg pardon, I thought it was; but I am mistaken: here comes Adine: I'll retire: let me inform you, if you distrust him, you are more in the wrong than you think for: he has a noble heart, and you may one day know he is not what perhaps he might appear to be.

SCENE VII.

BLANDFORD, ADINE.

BLANDFORD.

So! I see they are all resolutely bent to lead me by the nose: Dorfise, thank heaven, is of another nature; she says nothing, but submits to her unhappy fate without appearing too deeply affected by it; too confident, or too timid; she avoids me, and hides herself in retirement; such is always the behavior of injured innocence. Now, young man, tell me the truth in every particular with sincerity; nature seems in you pure and uncorrupted; you know I love you; do not abuse my growing inclination to you, but consider that the happiness of my life is concerned in this affair.

ADINE.

Indeed, sir, I love you too well to abuse or to deceive you.

BLANDFORD.

Tell me then everything as it passed.

ADINE.

First then, I assure you, that Dorfise—

BLANDFORD.

Stop there, you mean her cousin, I'm sure you do.

ADINE.

I don't indeed, sir.

BLANDFORD.

Well, go on.

ADINE.

Dorfise then, I say, introduced me by a private door to her chamber.

BLANDFORD.

She did, but 'twas not for herself.

ADINE.

It was.

BLANDFORD.

No, child; 'twas Mme. de Burlet, you know it was.

ADINE.

I tell you, sir, Dorfise was positively in love with me.

BLANDFORD.

The little rascal!

ADINE.

The excess of her passion surprised and shocked me: I was far from being pleased with it: nay, I assure you, I was angry at her: I was incensed at her falsehood; and told her, if I had been like her, I should have been more faithful.

BLANDFORD.

The villain! how they have prepared him! well, what followed?

ADINE.

After this she grew loud and vehement, when on a sudden a violent knocking was heard, and who should come in but her husband.

BLANDFORD.

Her husband! O very well! what a ridiculous story! the chevalier, I suppose.

ADINE.

No: a real husband, I assure you; for he was extremely brutal, and extremely jealous: he threatened to murder her, called her false, perfidious, infamous, and abandoned: I expected to have been killed, too, for he was in a dreadful rage with me, though for what reason I know not: I was forced to fall on my knees and entreat him to spare my life; I'm sure I tremble yet at the thoughts of him.

BLANDFORD.

The little coward! but this husband, what was his name?

ADINE.

I don't know, indeed.

BLANDFORD.

A fine trick this!—what sort of a man was he? describe him to me.

ADINE.

He seemed to me, as far as the horrid fright I was in permitted me to observe him, a fellow of a very disagreeable aspect, fat and short, like a turnspit, flat-nosed, with a large chin, hunch-backed, a yellow-tanned complexion, gray eyebrows, and an eye that looked like—the devil.

BLANDFORD.

An excellent picture! how can I recollect him by all this? yellow, you say, tanned, gray, short and fat: who can it be? but you only mean, I see, to laugh at me.

ADINE.

Try, then, sir, and prove me: to-night, this very night, she has appointed again to meet me.

BLANDFORD.

Another appointment with Mme. de Burlet?

ADINE.

Still, sir, you will mistake the person.

BLANDFORD.

Not with Dorfise?

ADINE.

With her, indeed.

BLANDFORD.

With her?

ADINE.

With her, I tell you.

BLANDFORD.

Amazing! you confound me! an assignation with Dorfise this night?

ADINE.

This very night, sir; if you please, you may see me there: I am to go in girl's clothes, which she herself sent me; and to go in by a private door to your mistress, sir, your faithful, prudent, discreet mistress.

BLANDFORD.

This is too much; I cannot, will not bear it: whichever way I consider it, I fear she is disloyal: may I depend upon you?

ADINE.

My heart is too deeply concerned for your interest and happiness to be insincere: yours I know is truth itself: indeed, M. Blandford, I love, and am faithful to you.

BLANDFORD.

The little flatterer!

ADINE.

Can you doubt my honor?

BLANDFORD.

Away! I—

SCENE VIII.

BLANDFORD, ADINE, MONDOR.

MONDOR.

Come, come, you make the guests wait, and stop the course of pleasure: why, you never wanted mirth and good company more in your life: to be sure, your affairs go badly enough; you have lost your mistress, but never mind it: you should not have set up for my rival; I told you I should gain the victory, and so I have.

BLANDFORD.

What would you inform me of, friend?

MONDOR.

Nay, nothing of consequence, only that I'm going to be married to your mistress, that's all.

BLANDFORD.

O very well! I know that already.

MONDOR.

What! did you know that I was to carry the lawyer with me, and that—

BLANDFORD.

Yes, yes, I know it all, your whole plot, and I don't care a farthing about it: [*Aside*] This boy has not learned half his lesson; hark'ee, sir, [*To Adine*] this appointment and yours are a little incompatible: what say you to this, sir? does it strike you? either you endeavor to deceive me, or are deceived yourself: but you are young in the school of vice; a heart like thine, simple and inexperienced, is an excellent instrument in the hands of a villain: alas! thou camest here but to make me miserable.

ADINE.

This is too much, sir: take care lest your harsh temper, and ill-placed resentment, should destroy that pity which still pleads for you; 'tis that alone which keeps me here: but go, run headlong to your ruin; listen to nobody, suspect your best friend, and believe only those who abuse you; accuse and affront me; but learn to respect a heart that, with regard to you, was never a deceiver, or deceived.

MONDOR.

Hear you that, sir? but you are choked with spleen; even children laugh at you; prithee, learn to be wiser: come along with me, and drown all your cares in Greek wine: come away, boy.

SCENE IX.

BLANDFORD, ADINE.

BLANDFORD.

Stay, Adine: thou hast moved me: thy concern alarms me: you know my humor, my folly, but you

know my heart too; 'tis honest, and has only too much sensibility: you see how I am distressed; can you take a cruel pleasure in laughing at my misfortunes? tell me the truth, I conjure thee.

ADINE.

I know your heart is good, nor is mine less pure: never till this hour did I but once put on disguise; but with regard to Dorfise and yourself I have been honest and sincere: I own I lament in you that fatal passion which has blinded you, but 'tis passion I know that will seduce the wisest of us all; love alone can set everything right; that has taken away your sight, and that should restore it to you.

[*She goes out.*

BLANDFORD.

[*Alone.*

What can he mean? love alone should restore it; he once put on a disguise, and yet he is sincere! I don't understand it; certainly 'tis all a trick, a plot only to make a fool of me: Mondor, Darmin, her cousin, Bartolin, Adine, Dorfise, Collette, all the world in short conspires with my own foolish heart to make me miserable and ridiculous: this vile world, which I despise as it deserves, is nothing but a confused heap of folly and wickedness: but if in this tempest of the soul I must say whether I will be knave or fool, my choice is made, and I bless my lot: O heaven! let me be still a dupe, but O preserve my virtue!

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE. I.

BLANDFORD.

[*Alone.*

What will become of me? where shall I fly for safety? my misfortunes follow one another without end: I go to sea; a pirate attacks and sinks my vessel: I come to land, and there I am told that an ungrateful woman, whom I adored, is a worse pirate still: a strong box, which I had left behind, is my only resource: a rascal promises to give it me back, and puts me off from time to time, and he perhaps may prove a third corsair: I am waiting for Adine, and he is not come yet; everybody provokes, and everybody avoids me: all perhaps the consequence of my unhappy temper which made me suspicious of every friend, and open to every enemy: if it be so, I am wrong; I own I am, and fortune has a right to sport thus with me: of what service is my melancholy virtue but to make me more sensible to my miseries, and more conscious of having deserved them? this boy, too, not come yet!

SCENE II.

BLANDFORD, MME. DE BURLET *passing across the stage.*

BLANDFORD.

[*Stopping her.*

Stay, madam, I beseech you stay, and calm, if possible, this tempest of my soul; for heaven's sake, one word with you: where are you running to?

MME. DE BURLET.

To supper: to be merry: I'm in haste, sir.

BLANDFORD.

I know I affronted you, and you have reason to be angry; but forget and forgive.

MME. DE BURLET.

[*Smiling.*

O I have forgiven you a great while ago: I'm not angry, I assure you.

BLANDFORD.

You are too good: will your gayety for once deign to interest itself in my distress?

MME. DE BURLET.

Gay as I am, M. Blandford, I assure you, I have friendship, esteem, and pity for you.

BLANDFORD.

You are sorry, then, for my unhappy fate.

MME. DE BURLET.

Your unhappy fate! yes: but more for your unhappy temper.

BLANDFORD.

You are honest, however, and truth you know, has always charms for me: but say, is Darmin a faithful friend, or does he deceive me?

MME. DE BURLET.

Darmin loves you, and possesses all your virtues with more softness and complacency.

BLANDFORD.

And Bartolin?

MME. DE BURLET.

You want me to answer for Bartolin, too, and for all the world, I suppose: excuse me; Bartolin, for aught I know, is an honest cashier; what reason have you to suspect him? he's your friend, and the friend of—Dorfise.

BLANDFORD.

Of Dorfise? but tell me freely; could Dorfise, could she entertain a passion for a boy, and in so short a time, too? and what is this lawyer that Mondor talks of? public report says he's to marry her.

MME. DE BURLET.

Public reports should be despised.

BLANDFORD.

I am this moment come from her: she has sworn eternal truth to me: she has wept: love and grief were in her eyes: did they belie her heart? is she false? and is Adine—you laugh at me.

MME. DE BURLET.

I laugh at your ridiculous figure: come, come, take courage, man: as for the boy, take my word for it, he'll never forsake you; 'tis impossible.

BLANDFORD.

You give me comfort: the coxcomb, Mondor, is not worth my care; Dorfise loves me, and I love her forever.

MME. DE BURLET.

Forever? that's too much.

BLANDFORD.

Not where one is beloved; but then this Adine must be a base calumniator, must have a bad heart.

MME. DE BURLET.

O no: be assured, he has a noble mind, candid, honest, and ingenuous, the happy favorite of indulgent nature.

BLANDFORD.

You mock me, madam.

MME. DE BURLET.

Indeed I don't: 'tis truth.

BLANDFORD.

Now am I plunged again in darkness and uncertainty; you sport with my distress, and take pleasure in tormenting me: Dorfise, or he, has deeply injured me: one of them, you must allow, has been a traitor to me; is it not so?

MME. DE BURLET.

[*Laughing.*

That may be.

BLANDFORD.

If it is, you see what reason I had—

MME. DE BURLET.

And after all it may not be so: I accuse nobody.

BLANDFORD.

I'll be revenged.

MME. DE BURLET.

Ridiculous! be less angry and more discreet: come, I'll tell you what; will you take the only sure method, one that I shall recommend to you?

BLANDFORD.

I will.

MME. DE BURLET.

Then leave this dark mysterious affair to itself; make no bustle about it, but turn everything, as I do, into a jest; take your money from Bartolin, and live along with us without care or solicitude: never go too deeply into things, but float with me upon the surface; you know the world, and bear with it; the only way to enjoy is to skim lightly over it: you look upon me as a giddy creature, and so I am; but let me tell you, the only matter of importance in this life is to enjoy ourselves, and be happy.

SCENE III.

BLANDFORD. [*Alone.*

To be happy! good! excellent advice! would not one think now it were an easy thing; that one had only to wish for happiness, to possess it? would it were so! and why should it not be? why should I take so much pains to make myself unhappy? shall I suffer this boy, and Darmin, and Mondor to distract me thus? no: I'll follow this giddy girl's advice; she's gay, but honest and sincere: Dorfise loves me, and I am yet secure: for the future, I'll see nothing, listen to nothing: they wanted to alarm me with this Adine, to hoodwink, and then to lead me where they pleased; but I'm not to be caught in their snares: Darmin is wrapped up in that niece of his, and would fain palm her upon me; but I detest her: ha! what's this?

[*Adine appears in woman's clothes at the farther end of the stage.*

Yonder's that unhappy youth who has caused me

so much uneasiness: he looks exactly like a girl: how genteel his air, and so easy, too, as if the clothes had been made for him! the face is too truly female.

SCENE IV.

BLANDFORD, ADINE.

ADINE.

Well, sir, you see I'm dressed for my part, and now you will know the truth.

BLANDFORD.

I desire to know nothing more about it! I have heard enough; leave me, I beseech you; I have altered my sentiments, and hate this disguise; go, go, put on your own habit, and trouble yourself no more with this affair.

ADINE.

What say you, sir? at last then I perceive it is not in my power to change your unalterable heart, or to reverse your cruel fate; alas! you know not the weight of grief that hangs upon me, but ere long you will see the fatal effect of it: farewell! I leave you, sir, forever.

BLANDFORD.

What can this mean? he weeps! speak, I entreat thee, tell me, what interest hast thou in my happiness or misery?

ADINE.

My interest, sir, was yours: till this moment never knew I any other: but I have been to blame, I tried to serve you; 'tis not the first time.

BLANDFORD.

The innocence of his look, his modest confidence, his voice, his air, his open and ingenuous behavior, still plead for him—but the hour is past when this intrigue you told me of was to have taken place; I was to have been an eye-witness of it.

ADINE.

Hark! I hear a door opening: this is the place, and this the time, when you shall be convinced who it is that loves you.

BLANDFORD.

Just heaven! it is possible?

ADINE.

It is.

BLANDFORD.

Stay you here then: but 'tis all a trick, an artifice: Dorfise! no—

ADINE.

Hush! I hear a noise: it comes towards us: I'm frightened, 'tis so dark.

BLANDFORD.

Fear nothing.

ADINE.

Be silent: for I hear somebody coming: hush! away.

SCENE V.

ADINE, BLANDFORD, *on one side of the stage, which is supposed to be quite dark;* DORFISE *on the other, on tiptoe.*

DORFISE.

I thought I heard my charmer's voice; how punctual he is! the dear boy.

ADINE.

Hush!

DORFISE.

Hush, is it you?

ADINE.

Yes: 'tis I: still faithful to my love: 'tis I who come here to prove that I have deserved a better return for all my tenderness.

DORFISE.

I cannot give thee a better: you must forgive me; I would not have made you wait so long, my dear, but Bartolin, whom I did not expect, is returned; in spite of all my care, he has got a fit of jealousy upon him.

ADINE.

Perhaps he is afraid of meeting Blandford here: he is a dangerous rival.

DORFISE.

Very likely, indeed: O my dear, what with Blandford, and my vile husband, I'm dreadfully hampered: I don't know which I hate most: in short, I'm sure of nothing, but that I love you.

ADINE.

You hate Blandford then heartily?

DORFISE.

I think I do: fear naturally begets aversion.

ADINE.

Well, but your other spouse—

DORFISE.

O him I never think of.

BLANDFORD.

[*Aside.*

How I could wish now—

ADINE.

[*Softly to Blandford.*

Hush! hush!

DORFISE.

I have been consulting, my dear, about the contract: it certainly might be set aside: I wish it were, and then I might have hopes of another match.

ADINE.

What, of marrying me?

DORFISE.

I think the best way would be for us to part for a time, to avoid scandal; and then meet, and be united by a sacred and a lasting tie.

ADINE.

A lasting tie! come then: let us begone: but how are we to live?

DORFISE.

Your prudent foresight charms me: I always admired your discretion: you must know, then, the fighting M. Blandford, a hero at sea, but an arrant blockhead at home, when he left Marseilles, to go after the pirates, most cordially and most affectionately consigned to me with his heart, his money and jewels also: as I was, like him, a novice in these

affairs, I put them into the hands of my other husband; from him I must endeavor to recover them, and assist Blandford: the poor man is honest and should live: away: let us part immediately, and take care nobody follows us.

ADINE.

But what will the world say?

DORFISE.

O never heed it: I was afraid of its scandal before I loved: but now I despise it: I'll be a slave to none but thee.

ADINE.

But me?

DORFISE.

I'll go immediately and get this strong box: that you know will be very necessary to us both: stay here, I'll be back in an instant.

SCENE VI.

BLANDFORD, ADINE.

ADINE.

Well, sir, what think you now?

BLANDFORD.

Never did I behold such base, such black ingratitude, such infernal falsehood; and yet, Adine, you see the force of powerful virtue, how its lively instinct speaks even in the most corrupted heart.

ADINE.

How, sir, in what?

BLANDFORD.

You see the perfidious wretch dared not rob me of all; she talked of assisting me.

ADINE.

[*Ironically.*

O yes, you are mightily obliged to her: have you not another strong box to intrust with this virtuous lady?

BLANDFORD.

Nay, do not laugh at me, Adine, nor plant such daggers in my heart.

ADINE.

I meant to heal and not to wound it: but can you yet admire her?

BLANDFORD.

No: she is loathsome: falsehood has robbed her of every charm.

ADINE.

If, sir, I free you from her snares, may I flatter myself, that while you detest her vices, you will not forget my honest service?

BLANDFORD.

No, generous youth! I look on you as my son and my deliverer, the guardian angel, whom heaven hath sent down to preserve me; the half of all I have will be but a poor reward for thy care and fidelity.

ADINE.

You must not know at present what reward I aspire to: but can your heart refuse the request which Darmin perhaps may ask of you?

BLANDFORD.

Ha! thou hast removed the veil: I see, I see it all; but who, what art thou? art thou indeed what thou resemblest?

ADINE.

[*Smiling.*

Whatever I am, for heaven's sake, be silent now: I hear Dorfise coming this way.

DORFISE.

[*With strong box.*

I've got the box; propitious love has favored my design: here, my dear, take it: away: let us be gone: have you got it fast?

BLANDFORD.

[*Taking it from her, and counterfeiting the voice of Adine.*

Yes.

DORFISE.

Come along then.

SCENE VII.

BLANDFORD, DORFISE, ADINE, BARTOLIN *with a sword in his hand, in the dark, he runs up to Adine.*

BARTOLIN.

Stop, villain, stop! art thou not satisfied with robbing me of my wife, but must run away with my money, too?

ADINE.

[*To Blandford.*

Help! murder! help!

BLANDFORD.

[*Fighting with one hand, and holding out the box to Adine with the other.*
Take the box.

SCENE VIII.

BLANDFORD, DORFISE, ADINE, BARTOLIN, DARMIN, MME. DE BURLET, COLLETTE, MONDOR *with a napkin and a bottle in his hand. Flambeaux.*

MME. DE BURLET.

What's the matter here! hui! hui! what! fighting, too?

MONDOR.

Hold, hold, gentlemen, what is all this noise about?

ADINE.

[*To Blandford.*

You're not wounded, sir, I hope?

DORFISE.

[*In confusion.*

Ha!

MME. DE BURLET.

What is the cause of this fray, gentlemen? pray inform us.

BLANDFORD.

[*To Bartolin, after disarming him.*

O nothing, madam; only this worthy gentleman, and trusty treasurer, this honest keeper of the strong

box, had robbed me of my mistress and my fortune: by the assistance of this amiable youth, I have detected their infamous designs, and recovered my money: go, sir, I leave you to your miserable fate, to this virtuous lady: know, my friends, I have unmasked their treacherous hearts; this villain——

BARTOLIN.

[*Going off.*

Your servant, sir.

MONDOR.

A ha! what comes of my assignation now?

BLANDFORD.

O, sir, they made a fool of you.

DARMIN.

And of you too, I think.

BLANDFORD.

They did so, indeed: I feel it yet.

MONDOR.

Treated you like an idiot.

BLANDFORD.

Dreadful, horrible! O prudery, how I detest thee!

MONDOR.

Well, come, let us think no more of prudes, wives, or women, but go in and drink about; that's my way of drowning misfortunes: the man that drinks is never melancholy.

MME. DE BURLET.

I'm really sorry my cousin Dorfise should behave

so foolishly: to be sure, it will set the world to talking, but it will be all over soon, and there's an end of it.

DARMIN.

Come, Blandford, banish sorrow, and for the future take care of a prude: but do you know this boy, who has restored to you your honor and fortune, and saved you from the dangerous precipice which your blind passion had led you to the brink of?

BLANDFORD.

[*Looking at Adine.*

But—

DARMIN.

'Tis my niece.

BLANDFORD.

O heaven!

DARMIN.

The very woman whom I so often proposed to my deluded friend; who, deceived by a faithless wretch, despised and hated all but her.

BLANDFORD.

How could I injure, by an unkind refusal, so many charms! such beauty and such virtue!

ADINE.

You never would have known me, if chance and my own constancy had not removed the veil of black ingratitude, and saved you from yourself.

DARMIN.

You owe everything, your fortune, and your reason to her generous love: what, then, is she to hope for in return? what will you do to make her amends?

BLANDFORD.

[*Kneeling to Adine.*

Adore her!

MONDOR.

This turn of affairs is as agreeable as it is surprising: we shall all be gainers by the change: away.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

THE TATLER

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Euphemia.
Damis.
Hortensia.
Trasimon.
Clitander.
Nerine.
Pasquin.
Several Footmen belonging to Damis.

THE TATLER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

EUPHEMIA, DAMIS.

EUPHEMIA.

Don't imagine, my dear, that, by what I'm going to say, I mean to exercise the authority of a mother, always ready as you know I am, to listen in my turn to your reasons when I think them good; my intention is not to lay my commands on you, but to give you my advice; it is my heart which speaks to you, and that experience I have had in the world makes me foresee evils which I would endeavor to prevent: you have been at court, I think, not above two months; believe me, 'tis a dangerous situation: the perfidious group of courtiers always look on a new-comer with an eye of malevolence, and soon find out all his imperfections: from the first moment, they condemn him, without pity or remorse; and, which is still worse, their judgment is irrevocable: be guarded against their malice: on the first step we take in life, the rest of it must in a great measure depend: if you once make yourself ridiculous, the world will think you always so: the impression will remain: it is in vain, as you advance in years, to change your conduct, and assume a more serious behavior: you will suffer a long time from old prejudices: even if we do grow better, we are still suspected; and I have often known men pay dearly in their old age for the errors of their youth: have a

little regard therefore to the world, and remember you ought to live now more for that than for yourself.

DAMIS.

Now I cannot conceive what all this long preamble tends to.

EUPHEMIA.

I see it appears to you both absurd and unnecessary: you despise those things which may be of the greatest consequence to you; one day or other perhaps you may believe me, when it will be too late: to be plain with you, you are indiscreet: my too long indulgence passed over this fault in your infancy, in your riper years I dread the effects of it: you are not without abilities, a good understanding, and a good heart; but, believe me, in a world so full of injustice, virtue will not make amends for vice; our faults are censured on every occasion, and perhaps the worst we can be guilty of is indiscretion: at court, my dear, the most necessary art is not to talk well, but to know how to hold one's tongue: this is not the place where society enjoys itself in the freedom of easy conversation; here they generally talk without saying anything, and the most tiresome babblers have the best success: I have been long acquainted with the court, and bad enough it is: but whilst we live there, we ought to conform to it. With regard to the women, you should be remarkably cautious; talk but seldom of them, and still less of yourself; pretend to be ignorant of all they do, and all they say; conceal your opinion, and disguise your sentiments; but, above all, be master of your secrets: he who tells those of another will always be esteemed a villain; and he

who tells his own, be assured, will, here at least, be looked on as a fool. What have you to object to this?

DAMIS.

Nothing: I am entirely of your opinion: I abominate the character of a tatler: that is not my foible, I assure you: so far from being guilty of the vice you seem to reproach me with, I now fairly confess to you, madam, that I have a long time concealed a thing from you which I ought to have told you of; but in life, you know, one must sometimes dissemble. I love, and am beloved, by a most charming widow, young, rich, and handsome, as prudent as she is amiable; in a word, it is Hortensia: judge, madam, yourself of my happiness; judge, if it were known, how miserable it would make all our courtiers, who are sighing for her: we have concealed our mutual passion from every one of them: this engagement has been made now for these two whole days past, and you knew nothing of it.

EUPHEMIA.

But I have been at Paris all that time.

DAMIS.

O madam, never was man so happy in his choice: the more you approve of it, the more satisfaction shall I feel, and the more pleasure in my pursuit of her.

EUPHEMIA.

I am sure, Damis, the confidence you repose in me, is a mark of your friendship, and not of your imprudence.

DAMIS.

I hope you never doubted that.

EUPHEMIA.

But seriously, Damis, you should reflect on the prospect of happiness before you: Hortensia, I know, has charms, but, besides that, she is the best match that could have offered itself in all France.

DAMIS.

I know she is.

EUPHEMIA.

She is entirely her own mistress, and can choose for herself.

DAMIS.

So much the better.

EUPHEMIA.

You must take care how you manage her, mark her inclinations, and flatter them.

DAMIS.

O I can do better: I know how to please her.

EUPHEMIA.

Well said, Damis: but remember, she's not fond of noise and bustle; no blustering or flashy airs will be agreeable to her: she may, like other women, have her foibles, but even in love matters she'll always act with discretion: above all, let me advise you not to show off in public with her, nor appear at court together, as if on purpose to be stared at, and become the topic of the day: secret and mystery are all her taste.

DAMIS.

And yet the affair must be known at last.

EUPHEMIA.

But, pray, what lucky accident introduced you to her? she never admits young men to her toilette; but, like a prudent woman, carefully avoids the crowd of wild sparks that are perpetually after her.

DAMIS.

To tell you the truth, I have never been at her house yet: but I have ogled her a long time, and, thank heaven, with success: at first she sent back my letters unopened, but soon after read them, and now writes to me again: for near two days past I have had strong hopes, and, in a word, intend this very night to have a tête-à-tête with her.

EUPHEMIA.

Well: I think I'll go and see her, too: the mother of a lover who is well received, cannot, I imagine, but be agreeable to her. I may contrive to speak of you, and prevail on her to hasten the match, on which I shall tell her your happiness depends: get her consent, and make her yours as soon as you can; I'll do my best to assist you: but speak of it to nobody else, I charge you.

DAMIS.

No, madam: never was mother more tender and affectionate, or friendship more sincere; and to please her shall, for the future, be my first ambition.

EUPHEMIA.

All that I desire of you is, to be happy.

SCENE II.

DAMIS. [*Alone.*

My mother is right: address and cunning are absolutely necessary in this world; there is no succeeding without them. I am resolved to dissemble with the whole court, except ten or a dozen friends, whom I may talk freely with: but first, by way of trial of my prudence, let me tell my secrets to myself a little, and consider, now nobody's by, what fortune has bestowed on me. I hate vanity, but there's no harm in knowing one's self, and doing ourselves justice: I have some wit, am agreeable, well received at court, and thought, I believe, by some, to be admitted to the king's private hours: then, I am certainly very handsome, can dance, sing, drink, and dissemble with the best of them: made a colonel at thirteen, I have reason to hope for a staff at thirty; happy in what I have, and with a good prospect before me; I'll keep Julia, and marry Hortensia; when I have possessed her charms, I'll be guilty every day of a thousand infidelities, but all with prudence and economy, and without ever being suspected as a rambler: in six months' time I shall make away with half her fortune, and enjoy all the court by turns, without her knowing anything of the matter.

SCENE III.

DAMIS, TRASIMON.

DAMIS.

Good morrow, governor.

TRASIMON.

[*Aside.*

Hang him for coming across me.

DAMIS.

My dear governor, let me embrace thee.

TRASIMON.

Excuse me, sir, but I really—

DAMIS.

Positively I will: come, come—

TRASIMON.

Well, what, what do you want?

DAMIS.

Nay, don't frown so, man, pray thee unbend a little: I am the happiest of mortals.

TRASIMON.

I came to tell you, sir—

DAMIS.

O by heavens, you kill me with that hard frozen face of yours!

TRASIMON.

I can't help it, sir, nor can I smile at present, for, let me tell you, you have got a bad affair upon your hands.

DAMIS.

Not so very bad, surely.

TRASIMON.

Erminia and Valere exclaim violently against you: you have spoke of them, it seems, too lightly, and old Lord Horace too desired me to tell you—

DAMIS.

O a mighty matter indeed to be uneasy about! Horace, an old lord! an old fool, a proud coxcomb, puffed up with notions of false honor, low enough at court, he puts on an air of importance in the city, and is as ignorant as he would fain seem knowing: as for Madam Erminia, it's pretty well known I had her, and left her abruptly, an ill-natured busybody; I believe you know a little of her lover, my friend, Valere; did you ever remember such a starched, affected, strained, left-handed understanding? O by the by, I was told yesterday in confidence, that his huge elder brother, that important creature, is well received by Clarice, and the fat countess is bursting with spleen and disappointment. Well but, my old commandant, how go your love-affairs?

TRASIMON.

You know I don't trouble myself much about the sex.

DAMIS.

That's not my case; for I do, and in faith, both in court and city, they keep me pretty well employed: but listen, while I intrust you with a secret, on which the happiness of my life depends.

TRASIMON.

Can I serve you in it?

DAMIS.

No: not in the least.

TRASIMON.

Then pray tell me nothing about it.

DAMIS.

O but the rights of friendship—

TRASIMON.

'Tis that very friendship which makes me shrink from the weight of a secret which is intrusted to me, not out of real regard, but from mere folly and weakness, which anybody else might keep as well as myself; which is generally attended with a thousand suspicions, and may chance to give us both a great deal of uneasiness, me for knowing, and you for saying more than you ought.

DAMIS.

Say what you will about it, captain, I must let you have the pleasure of reading this billet-doux, which this very day—

TRASIMON.

What a strange humor—

DAMIS.

You'll say it's written with a great deal of tenderness.

TRASIMON.

Well, if you insist upon it—

DAMIS.

'Tis dictated by love itself: you'll see how fond she is of me: 'tis the hand that wrote it which makes it so valuable: but you shall see it: zounds, I've lost it; positively I can't find it—hullo, la Fleur, la Brie.

SCENE IV.

DAMIS, TRASIMON, *Several Footmen.*

FOOTMAN.

Did you call, sir?

DAMIS.

Step immediately into the gallery, and bring me all the letters I received this morning: go to the old duke, and—O here it is, the blundering rascals had put it there by mistake. [*To the footman*] you may go. Now, you shall see it; mind now, I beg you'll attend.

SCENE V.

DAMIS, TRASIMON, CLITANDER, PASQUIN.

CLITANDER.

[*With a letter in his hand, speaking to Pasquin.*

Stay you, Pasquin, in this garden all day; be sure you mark everything that passes; observe Hortensia well; and bring me an account of every step she takes: I shall know then—

SCENE VI.

DAMIS, TRASIMON, CLITANDER.

DAMIS.

O here comes the marquis: good morrow, marquis.

CLITANDER.

[*A letter in his hand.*

Morrow to you.

DAMIS.

Why, what's the matter with you to-day, with that long melancholy face? what the deuce ails you

all? every creature I see looks gloomy and dismal to-day, I think; but I suppose—

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

I have but too much reason.

DAMIS.

What are you muttering about?

CLITANDER.

[*In a low voice.*

What a poor unhappy creature I am!

DAMIS.

Come, to give you both a little spirit, suppose I read you this little *billet* of mine, ha, marquis?

CLITANDER.

[*Aside, looking at the letter.*

What letter? can it be? surely 'tis from Hortensia: cruel creature!

DAMIS.

[*To Clitander.*

'Tis a letter would make a rival hang himself.

CLITANDER.

You are indeed a happy man, if you are beloved.

DAMIS.

That I most assuredly am; but you shall hear; your city ladies don't write in this style: observe her. [*He reads*] "At length I yield to the passion which has taken possession of my heart; I would have concealed it, but 'tis impossible: why should I not write what my eyes, no doubt, have a thousand times

informed you of? yes, my dearest Damis, I own I love you; the more perhaps because my heart, fearful of your youth, and fearful of itself, for a long time resisted my inclination, and told me I ought not to love you. After the confession of such a weakness, ought I not forever to reproach myself for it? but the more frankly I avow my tenderness for you, with the more care you ought to conceal it."

TRASIMON.

You take care, I see, to obey the lady's commands most punctually: a mighty discreet lover, to be sure!

CLITANDER.

Happy is that man who receives such letters, and never shows them.

DAMIS.

Well, what do you think of it? is it not—

TRASIMON.

Very strong indeed.

CLITANDER.

Charming.

DAMIS.

And the writer a thousand times more so. O if you did but know her name! but in this wicked world we must have a little discretion.

TRASIMON.

Well, we don't desire you to tell us.

CLITANDER.

You and I, Damis, love one another very well, but prudence—

TRASIMON.

So far from desiring you to acquaint us with particulars, that—

DAMIS.

Come, come, I love you both too well to dissemble with you: I know, you think, and the whole court has proclaimed it, that I have no affair here with anybody but Julia.

CLITANDER.

Nay, they have it from yourself; but as to us, we do not believe a word of it.

DAMIS.

To be sure, there was something between us, and the affair went on tolerably well till now: we loved one another, and then we parted, and then we met again; all the world knows that.

CLITANDER.

The world, I assure you, knows nothing at all about it.

DAMIS.

You think I'm very fond of her still, but you're mistaken; upon honor I am not.

TRASIMON.

'Tis nothing to me, whether you are or are not.

DAMIS.

Julia is handsome, that she is; but then she's fickle: the other—O the other is the very thing!

CLITANDER.

Well, and this charming woman—

DAMIS.

Come, I see you will know, and I must tell you: my dear friend, look at this picture, only look at it: did you ever see two such eyes? the most charming, most adorable creature; painted by Mace; that you know is saying everything; you know the features, don't you?

CLITANDER.

O heaven! 'tis Hortensia.

DAMIS.

You seem surprised.

TRASIMON.

You forget, sir, that Hortensia is my cousin, that she is tender of her honor, and a declaration of this kind—

DAMIS.

O give her up, give her up, man; why, I have six cousins; you shall have them all: make up to them, ogle them, deceive them, desert them, print their love-letters, with all my heart, it will give me no uneasiness: we should have enough to do indeed to be out of humor with one another, to vindicate the honor of our cousins: it's very well here, if every one can answer for themselves.

TRASIMON.

But Hortensia, sir—

DAMIS.

Is the woman I adore; and I tell you again, sir, she loves me, and me only; and to make you more angry, I intend to marry her.

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

Could I have been more cruelly injured?

DAMIS.

Our wedding will be no secret, but you shan't be there—cousin.

TRASIMON.

A cousin, sir, may have some power over her, and that you shall know soon. Your servant, sir.

SCENE VII.

DAMIS, CLITANDER.

DAMIS.

How I detest that fellow! the ridiculous pedant, with his affected airs of romantic virtue; a tedious, heavy, tiresome brute! you seem to be mighty curious about that picture, and examine it closely.

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

I must be master of myself, and dissemble.

DAMIS.

You may observe perhaps, one of the brilliants is missing at the corner there. It was a long chase yesterday, and there was such jostling and pushing one another; you must know I had four pictures loose in my pocket, and this unfortunately met with a mischance; the case broke, and a brilliant dropped out: as you go to town to-morrow, you may call at Frénaye's, he's dear, but clever in his way: I

wish you'd choose a diamond at his shop, as if it was for yourself; for, between you and me, I owe him a few pounds: here, take the picture, but don't show it to anybody. Your servant.

CLITANDER.

Aside.

Where am I?

DAMIS.

Well, God be with you, marquis, I shall depend on you. Take care, be discreet now.

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

Can he possibly do it?

DAMIS.

[*Returning.*

I love a discreet friend: you shall be my confidant: I'll tell you all my secrets. Is it possible for a man to be happy, to possess everything his heart can wish for, and not tell it to another? where's the joy of keeping our insipid pleasures to ourselves? one may as well have no friends as not trust them, and happiness uncommunicated is no happiness at all: I have shown you a letter, and a picture, but that's not all.

CLITANDER.

Why, what else have you?

DAMIS.

Do you know that this very night I am to meet her?

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

O dreadful! horrible!

DAMIS.

To-night, Clitander, before the ball is over, alone and unsuspected, I am to meet her by appointment in this garden.

CLITANDER.

[*Aside.*

O I am lost, undone: this last cruel stroke—

DAMIS.

Is not that charming, my friend? dost not rejoice with me, boy?

CLITANDER.

And will Hortensia meet you?

DAMIS.

Most certainly; just at dusk I expect her; but the declining sun already gives me notice of my approaching happiness: I must be gone. I'll go to your lodgings, I think, and dress: let me see, I must have two pounds of powder for my hair, and some of the most exquisite perfume; then will I return in triumph, and finish the affair immediately. Do you, in the meantime, prowl about here, that you may have some share in the happiness of your friend; I shall leave you here as my deputy, to keep off impertinent rivals.

SCENE VIII.

CLITANDER.

[*Alone.*

How hard a task it was to conceal my grief and my resentment! after a whole year of sincerest passion, when Hortensia's heart, wearied of resistance,

began at length to soften and relent, for Damis thus to come and change her in an instant! one fortunate moment has done what my long and faithful services in vain solicited: nay, she even anticipated his wishes, gave this young coxcomb that picture which I had so much better deserved: she writes to him, too! O that letter would have killed me with ecstasy: and then, to make my misery complete, she has written to me this morning, never to see her more: this hair-brained fellow has got hold of her heart, and will carry her off in triumph: O Hortensia, how cruelly hast thou deceived me!

SCENE IX.

CLITANDER, PASQUIN.

CLITANDER.

So, Pasquin, I have found out my rival.

PASQUIN.

Indeed, sir? so much the worse.

CLITANDER.

Yes: she's in love with that blockhead, Damis.

PASQUIN.

Who told you so?

CLITANDER.

Himself: the proud coxcomb boasted to me of the treasure he had stolen from me. Here, Pasquin, look at this picture; out of mere vanity he has left it in my hands, only that he may triumph the more. O Hortensia, who could ever have believed that Damis would supplant Clitander!

PASQUIN.

Damis is a good and pretty fellow.

CLITANDER.

[*Collaring him.*

Ha! rascal, an impertinent young fool, that—

PASQUIN.

Very true, sir, and perhaps—but, for heaven's sake, don't strangle me, sir: between you and me, sir, he's nothing but a babbler, a prig—

CLITANDER.

Be he what he will, she prefers him to me, Pasquin; therefore now is the time to exert thy usual skill, and serve me. Hortensia and my rival are to meet this night in the garden, by appointment; find out some method, if possible, to prevent it.

PASQUIN.

But, sir—

CLITANDER.

Thy brain, I know, is fertile; take money, as much as thou wilt: for heaven's sake, disappoint my rival: while he is tricking out his insignificant person, we may rob him of the happy moment: since he is a fool, let us take the advantage of his folly, and by some means or other keep him away from this place.

PASQUIN.

And this you think mighty easy to be done: why, sir, I would sooner engage to stop the course of a river, a stag on a heath, or a bird in the air, a mad poet repeating his own verses, a litigious woman that has a suit in chancery, a parson hunting after

a benefice, a high-wind, a tempest, or thunder and lightning, than a young coxcomb going to a rendezvous with his mistress.

CLITANDER.

And will you then abandon me to despair?

PASQUIN.

Stay: a thought is just come into my head: let me see, Hortensia and Damis have never seen me?

CLITANDER.

Never.

PASQUIN.

You have got her picture?

CLITANDER.

I have.

PASQUIN.

Good: and you have got a letter that she wrote you.

CLITANDER.

Ay, and a cruel one it is.

PASQUIN.

Her ladyship's orders, I think, to you, never to visit her again.

CLITANDER.

It is so.

PASQUIN.

The letter is without a direction I think?

CLITANDER.

It is, rascal, and what of that?

PASQUIN.

Give me the picture and the letter immediately; give them me, I say.

CLITANDER.

Shall I give a picture into other hands that was intrusted to my care?

PASQUIN.

Come, come, no ceremony: a pretty scruple indeed! give them me.

CLITANDER.

Well, but, Pasquin—

PASQUIN.

Leave everything to me, and rely on my discretion.

CLITANDER.

You want to—

PASQUIN.

Away, away: here comes Hortensia.

SCENE X.

HORTENSIA, NERINE.

HORTENSIA.

What you say, Nerine, is very true; Clitander is a worthy man; I know the warmth of his passion for me, and the sincerity of it: he is sober, sensible, constant, and discreet: I ought to esteem him, and so I do; but Damis is my taste: I find, by the struggles of my own heart, that love is not always the

reward of virtue; we are always won by an agreeable outside; and for one who is captivated by the perfections of the soul, a thousand are caught by the eye; I blush at my own inconstancy: but Damis comes no more here, I assure you.

NERINE.

What a strange humor this is! how resolute you are!

HORTENSIA.

No: I ought not to be there first, and positively I will not.

NERINE.

Are you afraid of the first meeting?

HORTENSIA.

To tell you the truth, Damis takes up all my thoughts: this very day I have had a visit from his mother, who has greatly increased my prejudices in favor of her son: I see she is extremely eager for the match, and presses it in the warmest manner: but I want to see the man himself in private, and sound his real sentiments.

NERINE.

You have no doubt of his regard for you?

HORTENSIA.

None: I believe, nay, I know he loves me; but I want to hear him tell me so a thousand and a thousand times over: I want to see if he deserves my love, to know his temper, his character, and his heart: I would not yield blindly to inclination, but judge of him, if I could, without passion or prejudice.

SCENE XI.

HORTENSIA, NERINE, PASQUIN.

PASQUIN.

Madam, my master Damis has sent me here to acquaint you privately—

HORTENSIA.

Is he not coming himself?

PASQUIN.

No, madam.

NERINE.

The little villain!

HORTENSIA.

Not come to me?

PASQUIN.

No, madam: but, as in point of honor he thinks himself obliged, he has sent you back this portrait.

HORTENSIA.

My picture!

PASQUIN.

Please to take it, madam.

HORTENSIA.

Am I awake?

PASQUIN.

Pray, ma'am, make haste, for I am really in a hurry: I have two more pictures to carry back for my master, and two to receive: and so, madam, till we meet again, I am your most obsequious—

HORTENSIA.

Perfidious wretch! I shall die with grief.

PASQUIN.

He desired me, moreover, madam, to inform you, that you need not ogle him any more, and that for the future he should be glad if you would find out some other dupe to laugh at besides himself.

SCENE XII.

HORTENSIA, NERINE, DAMIS, PASQUIN.

DAMIS.

[*At the farther end of the stage.*

Here I am to meet the dear object of my wishes.

PASQUIN.

Ha! Damis! then I am caught; but I'll take courage, however, and proceed. [*He runs up to Damis and takes him aside.*] I belong, sir, to Lady Hortensia, and have the honor to be employed on her little affairs; I have, sir, here a billet-doux for you.

HORTENSIA.

What a change is here! what a reward for my tender passion!

DAMIS.

[*Reads.*

Let me see, ha! how's this? "You deserve my regard, I know the esteem that is due to your virtues, but I cannot love you." Was ever such abominable perfidy? this is what I little expected indeed; but it shall be known; the public shall be ac-

quainted with it: it shall be no secret at court, I can assure her.

HORTENSIA.

[*At the other part of the stage.*

Could he carry his infamous perfidy so far as this?

DAMIS.

There, madam, you see what value I set on your correspondence.

[*He tears the letter.*

PASQUIN.

[*Running up to Hortensia.*

O madam, I blush for his behavior: you saw him tear the letter, which you condescended to write to the ungrateful man.

HORTENSIA.

He has sent back my picture: perish, thou wretched image of my ineffectual charms!

[*She throws down the picture.*

PASQUIN.

[*Coming back to Damis.*

There, sir, you see how she treats you; she has thrown away your picture, and broken it in pieces.

DAMIS.

There are some ladies in the world who receive the original in a very different manner, I can assure her.

HORTENSIA.

O Nerine, what a regard I had for this ungrateful man! Tell me, fellow, [*Speaking to Pasquin, and*

giving him money] for whose sake is it I am thus deserted? to what happy object am I sacrificed?

PASQUIN.

O madam, to five or six beauties, with whom he pretends to be in love, though he cares as little for them as for yourself; but your most dangerous rival is the fair Julia.

DAMIS.

[*Coming up to Pasquin.*

Here, take this ring, and now tell me honestly, on what impertinent court fool your sweet mistress has fixed her affections.

PASQUIN.

No one, sir, deserves her so well as yourself; but, to tell you the truth, there is a certain young abbé who ogles her perpetually; not to mention that I frequently help her cousin Trasimon over the garden-wall of an evening.

DAMIS.

I'm glad of it: this is excellent news; I'll put it into a ballad.

HORTENSIA.

The worst of it is, Nerine, that to make me still more unhappy, this affair will make a noise in the world, and I shall be horribly exposed: come, let us be gone, I will retire, and hide my tears.

PASQUIN.

[*To Hortensia.*

You have no more commands for me, madam? [*To Damis*] Can I be of any further service to you, sir? Heaven preserve you both!

SCENE XIII.

HORTENSIA, DAMIS, NERINE.

HORTENSIA.

[*Returning.*

Why do I stay in this place?

DAMIS.

I ought to be dancing at the ball now.

HORTENSIA.

He seems thoughtful, but 'tis not on my account.

DAMIS.

I am mistaken, or she looks this way; I'll even make up to her.

HORTENSIA.

I'll avoid him.

DAMIS.

O stay, Hortensia, can you fly me, can you avoid me? cruel, perfidious woman!

HORTENSIA.

Ungrateful man, leave me to myself, and let me try to hate you.

DAMIS.

That, madam, will be an easy task, thanks to your infidelity.

HORTENSIA.

'Tis what I ought to do: 'tis but my duty now, thanks to your injustice.

DAMIS.

And are we met at last, Hortensia, but to quarrel?

HORTENSIA.

How can Damis talk thus, and at the same time affront me, and love another! O Julia, Julia!

DAMIS.

After your writing me such a letter, madam—

HORTENSIA.

After your sending back my picture, sir—

DAMIS.

Could I send back your picture? cruel woman!

HORTENSIA.

Could I ever write a line to you that was not full of love and tenderness? perfidious man!

DAMIS.

Madam, I will consent to leave the court, to give up the posts I enjoy, and all my hopes of future preferment, to be despised and condemned by the whole world, if ever I sent you back the picture, the precious treasure which love intrusted to my care.

HORTENSIA.

And may I never be loved by the dear charmer of my soul, if I ever sent you that letter! but here, here, ungrateful man, is the picture your insolence returned me, the reward of tender friendship, which you despised; 'tis here, and can you—

DAMIS.

Ha! here comes Clitander.

SCENE XIV.

HORTENSIA, DAMIS, CLITANDER, NERINE, PASQUIN.

DAMIS.

My dear marquis, come here; where are you going? He, madam, will unravel all.

HORTENSIA.

Clitander? why, what does he know of the matter?

DAMIS.

Don't be alarmed, madam, he is my friend, to whom I have opened my whole heart: he is my confidant, let him be yours too: you must, indeed you must.

HORTENSIA.

Let us be gone this moment, Nerine: O heaven! what a ridiculous creature!

SCENE XV.

DAMIS, CLITANDER, PASQUIN.

DAMIS.

O marquis, I am the most unhappy of men; let me speak to you; I must follow her: observe me. [*To Hortensia*] Stay, Hortensia; nay, then I must after her.

SCENE XVI.

CLITANDER, PASQUIN.

CLITANDER.

I don't know what to think of it, Pasquin; I understood, by what you told me, that they had quarrelled.

PASQUIN.

I thought so, too: I'm sure I played my part: most certainly they have cause to hate one another; but, for aught I know, a minute's time may reconcile them again.

CLITANDER.

Let us observe which way they turn.

PASQUIN.

Hortensia seems as if she was going to her own house.

CLITANDER.

Damis follows her close: by his being behind, however, it looks as if she shunned him.

PASQUIN.

She flies but slowly, and the lover pursues.

CLITANDER.

She turns her head back, and Damis talks to her, but to no purpose.

PASQUIN.

I fancy not, but Damis stops her often.

CLITANDER.

He kneels to her, but she treats him with contempt.

PASQUIN.

O but observe, now she looks tenderly on him: if so, you're undone.

CLITANDER.

She is gone into her own house, and has dismissed him: joy and fear, hope and despair, at once surround me; I can't imagine how it will end.

SCENE XVII.

CLITANDER, DAMIS, PASQUIN.

DAMIS.

O my dear marquis, I'm glad you're here; for heaven's sake, inform me, what can be the meaning that Hortensia forbids my coming nigh her? how happens it that the picture, which I trusted to you, is now in her hands? answer me.

CLITANDER.

You amaze and confound me.

DAMIS.

[*To Pasquin.*

As for you, sir rascal there, the servant of Hortensia, at least the pretended one, I'll make an end of you this moment.

PASQUIN.

[*To Clitander.*

Protect me, sir.

CLITANDER.

[*To Damis.*

Well, sir—

DAMIS.

'Tis in vain—

CLITANDER.

Spare this poor fellow, let me entreat you, do.

DAMIS.

What interest have you in him?

CLITANDER.

I beg of you, and seriously.

DAMIS.

Out of regard to you, I will withhold my resentment; but tell me, scoundrel, the whole black contrivance.

PASQUIN.

O sir, 'tis a most mysterious affair; but I'll let you into some surprising secrets, if you'll promise not to reveal them.

DAMIS.

I'll promise nothing, and insist on knowing all.

PASQUIN.

You shall, sir, but Hortensia is coming this way, and will overhear us. [*To Clitander*] Come, sir, let us to the masquerade, and there I'll tell you everything.

SCENE XVIII.

TRASIMON, NERINE, HORTENSIA *in a domino, with a masque in her hand.*

TRASIMON.

Take my word for it, Hortensia, this young coxcomb will cover us with shame and ignominy, to show your letters and your picture about in this public manner: 'tis intolerable: I saw them myself; but I'll punish the scoundrel as he deserves.

HORTENSIA.

[*To Nerine.*

Is Julia then so beautiful in his eyes? do you think he's really in love with her?

TRASIMON.

No matter whether he is or no: but, if he dishonors you, it concerns me nearly; I know a relative's duty, and will perform it.

HORTENSIA.

[*To Nerine.*

Do you imagine he is engaged to Julia? give me your opinion.

NERINE.

One may know that easily enough from himself.

HORTENSIA.

O Nerine, he was excessively indiscreet: I ought to hate, yet perhaps still love him. O how he wept,

and swore he loved, that he adored me, and that he would conceal our mutual passion!

TRASIMON.

There, I'm sure, he promised more than he will perform.

HORTENSIA.

For the last time, however, I mean to try him: he's gone to the masquerade, there I shall be sure to find him: you must dissemble, Nerine: go and tell him that Julia expects him here with impatience: this masque at least will hide my blushes: the faithless man will take me for Julia: I shall know what he thinks of her, and of myself: on this meeting will depend my choice or my contempt of him. [*To Trasimon.*] You must not be far off: endeavor if you can, to keep Clitander near you: wait for me here, or hereabouts, and I will call you when there is occasion.

SCENE XIX.

HORTENSIA.

[*Alone, in a domino, with a masque in her hand.*

At length it is time to fix my wavering affections; under the cover of this masque, and the name of Julia, I shall know whether his indiscretion was owing to excess of love, or vanity; whether I ought to pardon, or to detest him: but here he comes.

SCENE XX.

HORTENSIA *masqued*, DAMIS.

DAMIS.

[*Not seeing Hortensia.*

This seems to be the favorite spot for ladies to make their assignations in: well, I'll follow the fashion: fashion, in France, determines everything, regulates precedency, honor, good-breeding, merit, wit, and pleasure.

HORTENSIA.

[*Aside.*

The coxcomb!

DAMIS.

If this affair of mine could but be known, in two years' time the whole court would run mad for love of me: a good setting out here is everything: then Ægle, and Doris, and—O there's no counting them, such a group, such a sweet prospect! O the pretty creatures—

HORTENSIA.

[*Aside.*

Light, vain man!

DAMIS.

O Julia, is it you? I know you in spite of that envious masque: my heart cannot be mistaken; come, come, my dear Julia, take off that cruel veil that hides thy beauties from me; do not, in pity do not, conceal those sweet looks, those tender smiles, that were meant to reward that love which they inspired; thou art the only woman on earth whom I adore.

HORTENSIA.

Let me tell you, Damis, you are a stranger to my humor and disposition; I should despise a heart that never felt for any woman but myself; I like my lovers should be more fashionable; that twenty young flirts should be hunting after him; that his passion for me should draw him away from a hundred contending beauties; I must have some noble sacrifice offered up to me, or I'll never accept of his services: a lover less esteemed would be of no value, I should despise him.

DAMIS.

I can make you easy on that head, my dear; I have made some pretty good conquests, and perhaps as expeditiously as most men: I believe I can boast of tolerable success that way: many a fine woman has run after me; another man would be vain of it: I could reckon up a few of your nice ladies who are not over-coy with me.

HORTENSIA.

Well, but who, who are they?

DAMIS.

Only give the word, my Julia, and I begin the sacrifice: there is, first, the little Isabel; secondly, the lively, smart Erminia; then there's Clarice, Ægle, Doris—

HORTENSIA.

Poor, pitiful offerings! I could have a hundred such every day: these will never do: they are loved, and turned off again twenty times in a week: let me have some respectable names, women of character, such as I may triumph over without a blush: if you

could reckon among your captives, one, who, before she saw the incomparable Damis, was invulnerable, one who in all actions paid the strictest regard to decency and decorum, some modest, prudent fair, who never felt a weakness but for you, that would be the woman.

DAMIS.

[*Sitting down by her.*

Now then, observe me: I have a mistress who exactly resembles in every feature the picture you have drawn: but you would not have me be so indiscreet as to—

HORTENSIA.

Not for the world.

DAMIS.

If I were imprudent enough to tell her name, I should call her—Hortensia. Why are you startled at it? I think not of her while my Julia's here: she is neither young nor handsome when you are by: besides, there is a certain young abbé who is very familiar with her; and, between you and me, her cousin Trasimon is too apt to come to her in an evening over the garden-wall.

HORTENSIA.

[*Aside.*

To join calumny thus to his infidelity, execrable villain! but I must dissemble: pray, Damis, on what footing are you with Hortensia? does she love you?

DAMIS.

O to distraction, that's the truth of it.

HORTENSIA.

[*Aside.*

Impudence and falsehood to the highest degree!

DAMIS.

'Tis even so, I assure you, I would not tell you a lie for the world.

HORTENSIA.

[*Aside.*

The villain!

DAMIS.

But what signifies thinking about her? we did not meet here to talk of Hortensia: come, let us rather—

HORTENSIA.

I can never believe Hortensia would ever have given herself up so totally to you.

DAMIS.

I tell you, I have it under her own hand.

HORTENSIA.

I don't believe a word of it.

DAMIS.

'Tis insulting me to doubt it.

HORTENSIA.

Let me see it then.

DAMIS.

You injure me, madam: there, read, perhaps you know her hand.

[*Gives her the letter.*

HORTENSIA.

[*Unmasking.*

I do, villain, and know your treachery: at length I have in some measure atoned for my folly, and have luckily recovered both the picture and the let-

ter, which I had ventured to trust in such unworthy hands: 'tis done: now Trasimon and Clitander, appear.

SCENE XXI.

HORTENSIA, DAMIS, TRASIMON, CLITANDER.

HORTENSIA.

[*To Clitander.*

If I have not yet offended you beyond a possibility of pardon; if you can still love Hortensia, my hand, my fortune, and my life are yours.

CLITANDER.

O Hortensia, behold at your feet a despairing lover, who receives your kind offer with joy and transport.

TRASIMON.

[*To Damis.*

Did I not tell you, sir, I should bring her to a right way of thinking? this marriage, sir, is my making: now, Damis, fare you well, and henceforth, learn to dissemble better or never attempt it more.

DAMIS.

Just heaven! for the future how shall I venture to speak at all?

END.

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